



ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN



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Amélie Rives

ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

BY

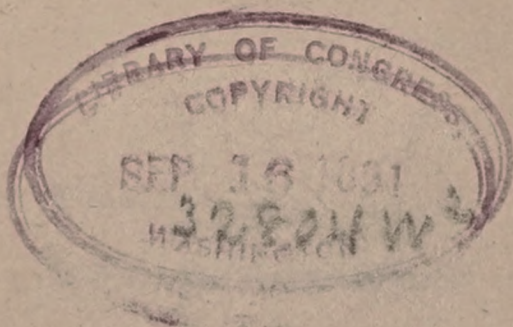
Troubetzkoy, AMÉLIE (RIVES)

AUTHOR OF

"VIRGINIA OF VIRGINIA," "THE QUICK OR THE DEAD," ETC.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man
lay down his life for his friends."

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

<p> PORTRAIT OF AMÉLIE RIVES, SHE HAD DANCED SOME NEGRO JIGS FOR THEM, ACCOMPANY- ING HERSELF ON HER VIOLIN, AS SHE STOOD WITH VENUS AT THE WAFFLE STAND, SHE DROPPED ON HER KNEES, STARING UP INTO THE GREAT HOLLOW ABOVE, SHE KNELT DOWN AND TOOK UP ONE OF THE WHITE HANDS, SHE KNELT THERE TREMBLING, SHE PRACTISED HER VIOLIN, SHE FIXED HER EYES UPON HIS FACE, VENUS HAD BEEN FILLING A BOTTLE WITH HOT WATER, SHE LOOKED SWIFTLY UP AT HIM AS SHE KNELT, GAZING CURIOUSLY INTO THE LARGE MIRROR, JEAN, "MOI PEUR," SAID TONY, HER FAIR HEAD HAD FALLEN BACK AGAINST A COLUMN, SHE LAY THERE FOR HALF AN HOUR WITHOUT SPEAKING, SHE WENT AND STOOD SILENTLY BESIDE HIM, </p>	<p> <i>Frontispiece</i> PAGE 6 18 68 72 84 113 140 144 168 185 224 289 308 311 341 </p>
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ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN.

CHAPTER I.

THE Maison Roget was filled almost entirely with Americans. There was only one Frenchwoman, a Madame Vamousin, whom the others called "Maman Cici." For fourteen years she had been a great cook; but having married a young coachman, and being passionately in love with him, she had retired from business for a year in order to devote her time more completely to him and to his favorite dishes. She was a woman of fifty, large, red, powerful, with an enormous bust and arms and the motion of one who glides upon invisible skates. Her eyes

seemed astonishingly blue, set in the midst of her purple-pink face. She had a pleasant smile, which showed two lines of teeth like little ivory saws. Her eyebrows were vague, her nose commonplace; her lips melted into the general tone of her face. She had deep dimples in each cheek, which looked as though drawn in with buttons, like the divisions in a tufted crimson-silk chair. She was amiable, thoughtful, generous; often sending one of her supreme creations in pastry or jelly to a favorite fellow pensioner, and being ready at any moment of the day or night to minister to the sick or sorrowful.

Miss Carter was a young girl who had lived for sixteen years with a maiden aunt in an old country house near Charlottesville, Virginia. When this aunt died, there had been such a squabbling among the other relatives over the little money and the tumble-down house that Jean, quietly determined, had obtained her share of \$10,000, the violin

which had belonged to her father, the white China crêpe shawl which her aunt had worn on occasions of ceremony ; and packing these together in a small, flat trunk, had set off for Europe with the young negress Venus. Her idea was to study there for several years, and, when she had become an accomplished violinist, to return to America as a member of some distinguished concert troupe. She was too proud to live in a state of semi-dependence upon her wrangling relatives, but had not the false pride which would make most young girls shrink from receiving a regular salary, whether as musician or lady's maid.

She and the black Venus had both been very homesick during the first six months. The constant staccato roll of the unfamiliar French had chilled and bewildered them. Now, after two years of hard work, Venus could comprehend a few ordinary sentences, although her great, good-humored lips found it impossible to shape themselves to the deli-

cate form of the strange words ; while Jean spoke quite fluently, with a pretty accent and a method of construction totally original. When she had first come she had *tutoyé*d everyone impartially, and such Frenchmen as visited the Maison Roget had found this especially delightful. Even now, when not thinking, she assumed this habit with a calmness which made it doubly amusing.

In appearance she was fair, small, slight, but with a slightness full of strength and elasticity. She had the air and movements of a young creature who has been much out of doors, in wind and rain, in summer and winter. One felt that she could ride, drive, walk, climb, swim, and that she only needed wings to be able to fly at once and without teaching. Her eyes were large, clear, shaded by thick brown-black lashes. One of the artists at the Maison Roget, with a good sense of color but a lack of poetic imagination, had said that Miss Carter's eyes were like



SHE HAD DANCED SOME NEGRO JIGS FOR THEM, ACCOMPANYING
HERSELF ON HER VIOLIN.—p. 6.

bits of barley sugar. Her eyebrows were wide and fairy-like, her nose delicately aquiline and full of character. She had a small crimson mouth, scalloped deeply over charming white teeth—a mouth which would have had unconscious tricks of allurements even in whispering above a rosary; while her little figure was as perfect in its round thinness as that of a Javanese dancer. She had hands so supple that she could bend her long, childish fingers back until they touched her arm. Her hair, of a bright russet color, curled roughly about her forehead, which was low and broad with a fine blue vein through the middle. She was just nineteen. Her birthday had passed in November and everyone in the house had given her some little trifle; while Maman Cici had made her the most wonderful cake, covered with complicated figures in nougat and surrounded by sixteen little pink candles. She had danced some negro jigs for them afterward, accompanying herself on

her violin. One peculiarly difficult step, called in Virginia "pulling caro," roused great enthusiasm. She also sang a song with this, to which Venus clapped in time. The words were rather monotonous:

"Sweet Lu-la—all day!
Pretty little Lu-la—all day!
Lu got a lover—all day!
Lu got a lover—all day!
Skip in a hurry—all day!
Swing yo' partners—all day!"

She wore charming gowns, which she made herself, after those she saw in the Bois on fashionable afternoons. They were always very simple; of cloth, cashmere, or calico; the colors dark or in quiet half-tones. After two years in Paris she looked like a young French girl of the higher world, with her straight little gray and blue frocks, her fresh, perfectly fitting gloves of tan-colored suède, her smart shoes with their patent-leather

tips, her hat copied after those of Petit or Heitz-Boyer.

Maman Cici and her husband occupied the entresol. Above them were two American women who studied painting at Julian's; one young, impertinent, ambitious, celebrated for the thickness and tints of her horse-chestnut-colored hair and the irremediable and uniform badness of her drawing; the other, a woman of about forty, with a charming nature and a pretty talent, which, if cultivated in the proper direction, might have made her quite a distinguished painter of fans. On the next floor lived the beauty of the pension with her husband, who was a realistic sculptor with a talent for painting. Their name was Benson, but she called herself Mrs. Hunter-Benson, and had the double name printed on her visiting cards. No one used engraved cards at the Maison Roget, it would have been considered a snobbish striving for superiority. Mrs. Benson's beauty

was of the dark, white-skinned type, which grows oily after an hour in a warm room, and which includes a good deal of pearl powder and a constant moistening of the lips. She had superb hair, so dull and black that it looked heavy, as though its thick, sleepy coils might have been carved from metal. He was tall, thin, silent, resembling, with his grayish pallor and deep, broad-lidded eyes, the woman-type of Burne-Jones.

A pupil of the sleek and sandpapered school occupied the fourth floor. This fact, known before she herself had been presented to them, had established her position in the pension. She was treated with good-natured but scarcely veiled contempt—in a word, as though she had been one of her master's pictures stepped from its frame.

On the sixth floor, above Jean, was another married couple, Adrian Farrance, a painter, and his wife. They had only been in the pension two weeks, but Jean was

already intimate with Mrs. Farrance and helped to amuse the baby when she had come back from her music-lesson and had finished practising for the day. Farrance, whose mother was a Spaniard, had lived in America from his seventh year. He was a man of thirty-two or three, tall, well-formed, of an olive darkness, and having singular black-gray eyes streaked with brown and overhung by broad, handsome eyebrows, beginning and ending abruptly. He wore a close-clipped, pointed black beard, and a mustache brushed up from his clean-cut mouth. With his mingling of the antique and modern, he resembled a painting begun by Velasquez and finished by Dagnan-Bouveret. He had unusually beautiful hands, long, muscular, ending in clean, oval nails, which he kept with more care than was customary in the Maison Roget. Mrs. Farrance was extravagantly blonde, with a tall figure curving forward. Her naturally fair hair she

had washed with concentrated soda until it had a dead, brittle look like spun sugar. Her eyes were of a very beautiful rich blue, and filled easily with tears. Her mouth was strong, determined, with full, dark-red lips, which had a trick of curling to one side when she spoke, and her complexion light and frail like a flower leaf of crapy texture. Her throat, breast, hands, and arms were exquisite, and she moved with a kind of graceful awkwardness, which was charming under the folds of the loose, picturesque house-gowns which she always wore. She was passionately fond of the perfume of vervain, and used it in such quantities that it would sometimes float beneath the door and struggle with the smell of cooking which usually pervaded the house.

Even during the first week of their acquaintance she had told Jean much of her past history. Her husband had been on the stage in America for several years, and

when she married him she had been playing leading parts with him for three months. He had not used his real name on the stage. He was a great actor, Mrs. Farrance said. If he had only gone on for three or four years longer the world would have acknowledged him. She herself thought that acting was a great art—as great as painting. Her mother had been an actress too, and she, Mrs. Farrance, had played *Juliet* when she was sixteen. She said that it was wonderful to play *Juliet* to Farrance's *Romeo*; she wished Jean could see him only once. He had not worn a beard then, and he was much, much handsomer without a beard. She had begged him not to let it grow when he left the stage, but he said that shaving took too much of his time in the morning. He had studied at the Beaux-Arts two years before coming to the Maison Roget, and afterward at Julian's and with Carolus; but he had far more talent for acting. It was always

that way ; people seemed to turn their backs upon their real talents and take up things which they could not do half as well.

“It is like compliments,” she ended. “Haven’t you ever noticed how one likes to be told that one’s nose is lovely when it is really one’s mouth? I am never half so pleased when people tell me how beautiful my eyes are as I am when someone happens to say that my mouth is pretty.”

“But it is pretty, really,” said Jean. “I love the way it tips to one side when you speak. I should have loved to see you say : ‘And for that name which is no part of thee, take all myself!’”

Mrs. Farrance smiled and kissed her on either cheek. “You dear little Goody Topaz-Eyes!” she exclaimed, “I’ll read the part for you some day ; and perhaps”—she paused and looked at the girl thoughtfully for a moment—“yes, I’ll dress up for you as Parthenia. It was my best part. Some-

times, do you know, the stage fever comes over me, and I feel as though I must rush out into the streets and throw myself under one of those great omnibuses! You don't know what it is, child; but I was an actress for twelve years, and I love it—I love it ferociously. I adore the very smell of the gas in the theatre, the dust of the scenes, the dark little ways and ladders and coils of rope, the warm smell of the rouge and pearl-powder; the tinsel and tarlatan and glue and wigs; and then the slant of the stage and the twinkle of the footlights, and that great horseshoe of round balls which one sees are heads after a moment or two."

She began to cough suddenly, and Jean ran to her with a bit of jujube paste and a glass of water.

CHAPTER II.

ALTHOUGH Jean was so intimate with Mrs Farrance, she did not see much of Farrance, and when she did was shy and tongue-tied. She thought him one of the handsomest persons conceivable, and agreed with his wife in looking upon him as a genius. He had a delightful voice in speaking—quiet, rich ; Jean was sure he could sing wonderfully if he chose. She copied his care of his hands, and spent some time every morning in arranging with a little celluloid stick the rim of flesh about her pretty round nails. She imagined him as *Hamlet*, and often thrilled over his fancied pronunciation of the words, “I loved Ophelia.” He was not at all her idea of *Romeo*, in spite of Mrs. Farrance’s detailed description of his costume, voice,

gestures, and original method of stabbing himself in that character. He was far too cold and self-contained, she thought. Farrance, on his side, considered Jean a pretty, wild nymph, with a decided talent for music and a fortunate way with babies. The child did not scream so deafeningly now when he came back from his *cours*, tired out and discouraged. It lay on Jean's breast contentedly, sucking an India-rubber ring, while he lounged in an arm-chair and played with the fingers of his wife, whom he adored. He talked very little, being one of those men whose opinion is valued because seldom expressed; and would often pass the whole evening in entire silence, smoking cigarette after cigarette, changing Mrs. Farrance's rings to different fingers, sketching in pen and ink on scraps of charcoal paper which had been blurred with unsuccessful drawings, walking up and down the narrow studio in a brown study, his fingers combing his short

beard, a copy of *Gil Blas* or *Le Grelot* in his other hand. Sometimes his wife walked beside him for a little while, and Jean used to think how beautiful and strong his hand looked, sunk among the loose folds of stuff at her frail waist.

It was he who had given Jean the name of "Goody Topaz-Eyes," on one of the rare occasions when he had spoken to her. She had been sitting absent-mindedly one evening on a high wooden chair near the stove, stringing some gilt beads which she had brought back for the baby, and looking at Farrance, whom she thought absorbed in his pen-and-ink drawings. "Well, Goody Topaz-Eyes," he had said, finally, "when you have quite taken me in, would you mind telling me what conclusion you have come to." Jean reddened even now, whenever she thought of this. She fancied him laughing at her, although he had been quite grave, and had not lifted his glance from his work.



AS SHE STOOD WITH VENUS AT THE WAFFLE STAND.—p. 18.

The other memorable remark that he had made to her had been when passing her as she stood with Venus at a *gaufre* stand on the Boulevard des Invalides. Jean and Venus were both eating these French waffles, and Jean knew that there was butter on her mouth. "I fancied you lived on air," he had said; "and now, since I've turned that corner, you've disposed of five waffles, one more than Venus can boast of. I shan't call you Goody Topaz-Eyes any more; I shall rechristen you 'The Waffle Fairy.'" To Jean's relief, he did not carry out his threat, which had the result, however, of keeping her away from waffle-stands for two weeks afterward.

As the Maison Roget was near the Gare Montparnasse, and as Jean went on foot to and from her music-lesson on the other side of the Seine, she used to take Venus with her, dressed in her ordinary costume of dark woollen gown, white apron, and colored silk

head-kerchief. Against this the girl finally rebelled, and entreated so piteously to be allowed to dress herself in a more usual style for the street, that Jean consented, making the condition that she should resume her head-kerchief and apron when in the house. Venus went with an Irish friend to the Bon Marché to purchase her new costume, and the result was unique. The passers-by turned more than ever to stare after the square, gawky figure clad in a gown of apple-green cashmere, with black velvet sleeves, its round woolly head bearing an enormous plaque of black felt ornamented with bows of green velvet and Eiffel-red feathers; its splay feet bulging under enormous low shoes of tan-colored leather, which had foxings of light-gray cloth and white porcelain buttons; its flat gray-black wrists protruding from a muff of imitation ermine, with a shirred green satin lining. Venus had spent the accumulated wages of

six months on this outfit, and was radiant over its effect. Now, when the crowd stared at her she was enchanted, and switched her apple-green skirts as only a Virginia darkey can, bridling and putting her toy muff to her lips, as she had seen ladies do in very cold weather. When she returned from her walk with Jean the first day of wearing her new clothes, the concière had made her a low bow, saying :

“Mademoiselle, mes plus respectueux hommages ! Vous avez eu un succès fou à la Maison Roget. Tout le monde parle de vous. Quel chien ! Mon Dieu, ce n'est pas du chic ça, c'est plus que duc hic, c'est du génie !”

Of the various articles which composed her costume the ermine muff was her favorite. She filled the little round blue cardboard box in which she kept it with camphor, even during the winter, and its daily airing did not dispel this odor, which was

united morning and evening with the smell of Mrs. Farrance's vervain and the bouquet de cuisine.

After two years of unremitting work, Jean had made great progress on the violin. Her master said that in time she would even play remarkably. She knew that this "in time" meant at least five years more of labor as unflagging; but she was patient and utterly absorbed in her music, which, in her strange, independent life, took the place of sweethearts and bouquets and daily cotillons at the White Sulphur. She had been in Paris two years and at the Maison Roget for sixteen months. She was now nineteen. She had never allowed anyone to be attentive to her and had never compromised herself to the slightest extent, in spite of her unusual and unchaperoned mode of life. The Bensons she had known in America; also the pupil of the léché school, whom she patronized in her gay, off-hand

way, and tried to coax into going to Carlo-rossi or Carolus.

She saw more of Mrs. Farrance, however, than of anyone else, and had grown fond of the baby, who was named Anthony, called Tony, and had beautiful eyes, already exactly like those of Farrance. Tony was only eight months old, very fretful, on account of teething, and decidedly fonder of Jean than of his mother.

One afternoon in January, when the three were alone in Mrs. Farrance's apartment, she offered to carry out her promise in regard to the Parthenia dress, and sent Jean to an empty biscuit-box to fetch it. The apartment consisted of two rooms, one the studio, an oblong of about nine by fourteen feet, the other a bedroom, curtained off with an old sail, painted by Farrance to represent tapestry, and not much larger than an ordinary cabin on a French steamer. The walls were lined from top to bottom with his

sketches. There were some chairs of different countries and epochs, which had been bought as great bargains at antiquity shops. An old burgomaster's chair in black, worm-eaten walnut from Nuremberg; a Venetian chair, cased in cracked, gilded leather; two Louis XV. fauteuils, painted gray and covered with cheap silk, which Mrs. Farrance had embroidered scantily. There was a stove not much larger than a top-hat, but in which a whole goose could be roasted. In the other room stood a bed, also picked up in a curiosity shop—very pretty, with its Louis XVI. bows and rosettes; and a small looking-glass hung opposite over a carved console which had been turned into a wash-stand.

CHAPTER III.

JEAN found the biscuit-box pushed under the bed, and lifted out the Parthenia costume piece by piece. The upper robe, a pale-blue cashmere, was edged with a Greek pattern of silver in machine embroidery ; the under garment, of white woollen stuff, had only a deep hem. There was a fillet of silver-gilt for the hair and bracelets for wrist and upper arm, connected by tarnished chains. Jean brought them into the studio, where Mrs. Farrance was excitedly taking out rouge and powder and hares' feet and little swansdown puffs from a card-board box.

“ It's getting dark,” she said ; “ you must see me in all my glory. We'll pull a sail over the window and light the candles ; but

you mustn't watch me 'make up'—it gives me the fidgets. I'll go into the other room, and you can wait here with the baby and shake out the dress."

She gathered up an armful of her little pots and bottles and went into the next room, letting down the drapery from its wooden hook, which Jean had gilded freshly the day before. The baby was asleep on a pile of cushions in the Venetian chair. Outside there was a slow colorless rain falling. An orange-woman's stand, with its two orange-tinted lamps stuck about like a fiery species of the same fruit, made a vivid glare of color in the pale light. People straggled along, with and without umbrellas. A little girl of about six passed, running, her skirt turned over her blond head and two enormous rings of bread dangling from either arm. Then three more children, also running, boys this time, looking like small ink sprites, with their Capuchin hoods of black oil-skin

drenched by the rain. A great wagon of straw creaked by, covered with its cloth of faded, weather-beaten sea green. Then came fifteen huge gray percherons, straining under their load of cream-colored sandstone. Jean thought that it took a good while to "make-up." She heard Mrs. Farrance coughing violently behind the lowered curtains. "It must be all that powder and stuff," thought the girl. "I wish she'd come out. Poor thing! I suppose she has her stage fever on to-day. I wonder if she's very ill; that cough sounds dreadful to me."

At this moment Mrs. Farrance pushed aside the imitation tapestry and came forward with a candle in her hand. Jean could not keep back a cry, she was so beautiful. In the soft candle-light her hair lost its dead, greenish tinge; her eyes were liquid, brilliant, under their darkened lids. There was a touch of rouge on each cheek, making them seem less thin. Her lips were parted. She

had put the fillet in her hair, which was twisted into a graceful knot at the back of her small head.

She laughed as she saw Jean's startled eyes, and put down the candle which she held. "Ah, it makes a difference, doesn't it?" she said in a soft restrained voice, which was yet vibrating with excitement. "One can fool old age for twenty years as an actress. I could look like this at forty, perhaps at fifty. There's Sarah; think of it, she must be forty if she's a day, and she plays *Camille*, and *La Tosca*, and *Frou-Frou*, and makes everyone cry. If you saw her on the street at two o'clock in the day, with her face washed, it would be different; but on the stage she is lovely. Even with that figure she is the most graceful creature alive. Oh, what a life! what a life! and to have had to give it up!"

She stood quite still for a moment, staring past Jean out into the dark gray rain, her

hands wrung together, her breast moving with short, eager breaths. Suddenly her whole figure seemed to relax in a long sigh. "Come," she said, "help me to dress."

Jean put the strange clothes over her head, and hooked them in unusual places as she was told. She drew a pair of sandals over the pretty, thin feet, clasped the bracelets on each arm, and took her own little brooch of Rhine pebble to fasten the blue cashmere peplum on the left shoulder.

"How lovely you look," she said, when all this had been completed; "it is the very dress for you! No wonder he fell in love with you! I think all the actors in the troupe must have been in love with you."

Mrs. Farrance walked slowly up and down, her eyes sparkling, her lips trembling into smiles, just touching now and then with her delicate rouge-tipped fingers her bracelets and the fillet in her hair. She seemed to

have forgotten Jean, who was sitting on the arm of the Venetian chair, patting the baby, whom she feared would be wakened by their voices.

“To have worked as I did for twelve long years—for twelve long years,” the woman kept repeating, “and then to have given it up.”

Jean did not know what to say, or whether she had better speak at all. She lifted the baby, who had begun to whimper in his sleep, and hushed him gently against her shoulder. All at once Farrance entered. He looked tired, and when he saw his wife whitened to the lips. But she ran to him; she hung on his arm, radiant, smiling. She caressed his dark face with her narrow, wax-white hand. She laughed, she cried, she slipped to the floor and held him about his knees, beautiful, tragic, with the false color in her lips and the real entreaty in her great eyes. She fawned on him, calling him fool-

ish love-names, stammering, choking in her excitement.

“Adrian, my Adriano, my little Adrian, my lover, my master! let us go back to it, the dear old life! I was so happy; I didn’t cough at all. I should get well then, I know I should. And I would love you so! I would love you so! And you would be a great actor, and everyone would know it. This is killing me! I have had three years of it. I know I shall die! I know——” She leaned her head against his knees, in a terrible fit of coughing. Farrance looked over her head at Jean, his eyes cold and hard. They seemed to be saying:

“I owe this to you, Jean Carter. I thank you; I hope you are enjoying what you have done.”

But the next moment he had lifted his wife in his arms and had carried her and placed her in one of the fauteuils, pushing the other one forward, so that together they

formed a kind of sofa. He pressed her head against him with one hand and took her two little uncovered feet in the other. "My darling! you will give yourself your death with your feet like this, and in such weather. What's the matter, my poor heart, my poor tired bird? Cry it all out here on my breast. I would die for you! I'll do whatever you want; I'll go anywhere; I'll take you anywhere! I'll go back to America! Lilian! for God's sake!"

Jean sat staring at them, paralyzed. The baby began to whimper more fretfully, and she was obliged to move him about. She sat like a machine, waving him up and down, her eyes fastened on the Farrances, who were still clasped in each other's arms. She could not believe that it was Farrance who spoke; she could not believe that it was he who looked at his wife with those eyes, wild, passionate, imploring. Something made her tremble all over. She wished to rush out of

the room, and yet she could not place the crying, fretful baby there on his cushions and leave him to be comforted by a father and mother who had evidently forgotten his very existence. Their voices grew lower; she could not hear what they said. Once she saw Farrance bend his head over his wife's in a kiss which she thought would never end. She found herself gazing from the little round Dutch clock, on the wall opposite, to them; then back to the clock. A nervous desire to laugh grew upon her. When at last he raised his head she heard herself give a sobbing, hysterical breath, which she smothered on the firm little chest of the baby, who thrust his strong, swarthy fist into her hair and tugged at it. The pain brought her to herself, and she sat quietly dancing the child, rattling his string of gilt beads to divert him, lending him one of her slim white fingers to munch with his feverish, swollen gums.

By and by she became conscious that she was suffering. It was a strange, vague pain which puzzled her. She thought at first that it was physical, and altered her position, taking Tony on her other arm. She tried to think only of him, to keep herself from looking at the man and woman murmuring to each other in low voices, stroking each other with movements full of a passionate tenderness, now pausing to kiss each other in a strained embrace. The blond hair had loosened from its Greek knot and fell thickly down upon her breast. He lifted it in his hand and buried his face in it with an ardent gesture. Once, when his wife put her lips to his of her own will, Jean saw him shiver. She thought that it must be very late, that she must have been sitting there two hours. The clock showed that only twenty minutes had passed. The baby had fallen asleep again, but she still hushed him with mechanical movements of arm and body. She felt

strangely, as though she had taken a large dose of quinine; there was such a surging and buzzing in her ears, and all the while that dull pain in her breast grew heavier and heavier. Then a feeling of anger came over her. How rude and unfeeling they were to turn their backs upon her and leave her there without even a word of thanks to nurse that heavy child into quietness—she, Jean Carter, on whom they had not the slightest claim. They were treating her like a servant. Her breast filled with an angry breath. Something hot fell on her hand. To her amazement she found that she was crying. This puzzled her more than ever. For the first time in her life she could not define her sensations. Was she angry or hurt or sorry or physically ill, or perhaps all four together? Her face grew always paler. The little vein in her forehead pulsed hotly. Suddenly Farrance rose and turned to her.

“You can give me the child,” he said; “we

are very much obliged to you; we should like to be alone now."

Jean looked at him steadily for a moment and then put Tony softly into his outstretched arms. She thought at that moment that she discovered her feeling, and that it was hatred. She had a savage desire to fly at Farrance and set her sharp little teeth in his dark hand. She said: "Good night; I'm sorry that Mrs. Farrance feels badly," in a quiet voice, and shut the door so gently that the latch made no noise in slipping into place.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER Jean had left the Farrances' apartment she went and sat by herself on the dark stairway. Her heart was sending great jets of blood into her arms and head. Her hands felt hot and swollen, as they had felt one day when Venus was ailing and she had swept out the room herself. A feeling of furious anger, of hot loathing, rushed over her in gusts, and made her slight little body palpitate as she sat there leaning her forehead between the balusters, which she held in both hands. He had insinuated that she had been officious—that she had remained where she was not wanted. He was probably discussing her now with his wife, and calling her “a nice little thing enough, but forward.” She imagined him saying: “You spoil her,

my dearest. Really she is beginning to be a nuisance. And fancy her not having the delicacy to go away at once this evening!" She felt that she must let him know how much she had longed to go away. It had cost her the greatest effort to sit there soothing Tony, hearing and seeing them in spite of herself. This must be what English people meant by saying that they had "a horror of scenes." Jean trembled anew when she thought of the one which had just passed in the room above. It was horrible—odious! But why—why? She could not understand; she only knew that she was angry, that she detested Farrance, that she hoped Tony would be ill that very night—not ill enough to die, but to make Farrance long for her, implore her to come, even send the doctor to entreat her. She would be cold, firm, as hard as stone. She made up some droll little French sentences which she would say to the doctor, repeating them over to herself,

to insure the correct intonation and elision. Then she sat clenching her small teeth and gazing into the sparkling darkness before her. "How I detest that man!" she told herself. "How I should like to tell him what a cad he is—what a cool, insolent, presumptuous cad! How could she have married him! How can she endure him! To have him scarcely speak to her every day, and then patronizing her in her wretchedness with 'My darlings' and 'My owns,' and—and kiss her so! I should die—I should run away! And then that great baby always staring, staring, staring with the same big, solemn eyes! And to have taken so much trouble and to be treated so!" She remembered suddenly a strange dream which she had had once all night long. She would start up, shudder, try to keep awake, fall to sleep at last and dream it again. It was that she loved the son of the concière, who was pilot on one of the mouches, or boats that run up and down the Seine, and

came to see his father and mother twice a month. He was tall and dark, with light-blue eyes, clear, round, wicked. She dreamed that he had kneeled to kiss her hand, and that she had looked down at him quite content and full of affection. In her dream he had been the prince of all her love-stories. It had been horrible, but so vivid; and the fact always remained—she had loved him in the dream. She shuddered and wondered why the thought of him returned to her at this moment. It was growing very cold there on the stairs. The smell of frying potatoes came up to her from the Bensons' rooms. Mrs. Benson had a machine for making what she called "Saratoga chips," and even Maman Cici acknowledged that Mrs. Benson could surpass her in frying potatoes. Jean shuddered again. She was not hungry; the rich smell disgusted her. She thought that she would go down to her own room and pick out darkey tunes for Venus on her violin,

using it like a banjo, without the bow ; but when she opened the door Venus was not there, and the fire was low and sullen under a flaking of yellow-gray ashes. Jean hesitated ; somehow she did not wish to be alone. She decided finally to call on Maman Cici, but had to knock three times before anyone answered. Maman Cici was speaking very excitedly to someone who answered with a gentle, low ripple of timid sound. “ Entrez ! ” shouted Maman Cici, finally, in the tone of one who says, “ Eh bien ! allez au diable ! je m’en fiche ! ” When Jean entered she found the toilet-table pulled forward, and three tallow candles burning in candelabra of imitation Saxe china on either side of the muslin-framed toilet-glass. Piles of embroidered cambric were tossed to right and left, on the chairs, the tables, the bed—even the floor. Maman Cici, very purple, her forehead and long upper lip covered with little drops of perspiration, stood gesticulating in a chemise

and petticoat of rose-colored surah, heavily embroidered and fluttering with little knots of ribbon. Her uncorseted form rolled amply into its natural contour. A little woman, thin, bent, with a tired brown face under a round black bonnet, and her hands folded before her over her black skirt, stood receiving the outpour of reproaches, with an even undertone of meek explanation.

Maman Cici's one pronounced fad was a love of elaborate underclothes, and her large wardrobes were filled with them. Whenever a novelty of this description appeared at the Louvre or the Bon Marché, Madame Vamousin bought it immediately. She had nightgowns, petticoats, chemises, in all colors, in all shapes, in nearly all materials. One day she cried when she found that two charmingly embroidered nightgowns, which she had bought for a mere nothing, would not meet about her huge body, and had to be disposed of to the slim little Virginian.

Maman Cici was very fond of Jean, but it made her unhappy to think of those wonderful nightgowns wasting their beauty on Jean's uncivilized, goggle-eyed black servant, when Auguste Vamousin, with his keen appreciation of the beautiful, might have had them to delight in.

“Figure to yourself,” cried Maman Cici, when she discovered that it was Jean who had been knocking, her mottled shoulders undulating with the vigor of her movement, “figure to yourself, Jeanne, mon bijou, that this ninny has ruined—ruined my four lovely new sets of underclothes—has utterly ruined them, and Monsieur Vamousin comes tomorrow! It is his fête—the fête of Saint Augustin—and I had intended a pleasant surprise. But now, with his keen eye, he will see everything! And look at her, the idiot! How she stands there trickling out excuses like a robinet! Oh, what a disappointment! what a disappointment! What a life is ours,

my dear child!" She turned round and round before the mirror, looking at herself from every side by means of the little glass which she held in her hand. Her flesh showed through the eyelets of the embroidery as though it had been stretched over magenta silk, and her great back looked like a brick wall from which the stucco had been torn in the shape of a V. Enormous cotton ankles protruded from the edge of the thin pink material. Her feet, in their large gray felt slippers, reminded Jean of oblong hornets' nests. She wished to laugh in spite of her own anger, which still throbbed fiercely.

"But what is the matter?" she asked, finally. "It looks very well, Maman Cici; how is it ruined?"

She came forward to examine the work more closely. "There are hundreds of things!" cried Madame Vamousin. "It is too long. The embroidery is too common. I ordered marguerites, and that idiot has put

a pattern that one has seen for six months at the Bon Marché! I wished something quite novel, quite original. There, go!" she cried, suddenly, turning again to the little sewing-woman; "there is nothing to be done; it's too late. I shall have to take them, but you'll never get another stitch of work from me!" She snatched her huge blue satin corset from the bed and began hooking herself into it as the other left the room.

"They are all alike," she said, speaking between her gasps, for she had to hold her breath when she fastened her stays; "they are all alike, these couturières; all liars, all cheats, all idiots. But you look tired, little Jeanne. You have worked too hard to-day, and you have come to tell Maman Cici of your discouragement, hein?" She enveloped herself in a wide gray dressing-gown trimmed with violet braid, and drew two easy-chairs covered with red cretonne to the

fire. Sinking slowly into one with the collapse of the deep feather-stuffed cushion, she held out her fat hand to Jean, who had established herself in the other, with one foot on the fender, her elbow on her raised knee, and her chin in the hollow of her palm. "That is it, hein?" repeated Madame Vamousin. Jean moved her finger in negation, without lifting her chin from her hand.

"No," she said, "I'm not discouraged; it's rage. I'm furiously angry."

Madame Vamousin made a comprehending motion with her head up and down. "Ah, is it not dreadful, the anger? It is worse than anything. I suffer more from a fit of anger than when I eat too much compote. And I have been angry to-day! Heavens, in what a rage I have been!"

"What do you do when you feel like that?" said Jean.

Madame Vamousin opened her well-padded hands, shut them, opened them

again. "Rien, absolument rien," she said, with each movement.

"I shall do something," muttered Jean, with locked teeth.

"It will not help you, chère petite. I have tried everything; nothing helps."

"Then I will invent something."

"You cannot, you cannot, cher bijou," the other assured her. They were silent for a moment. Finally Jean said:

"When was the time that you were the angriest in all your life, Maman Cici?"

The broad, glazed face settled into creases of thought; the blue eyes grew grave, even sombre. She fitted her short forefinger, with its three circles of fat, into the cleft in her broad chin; with the other hand she balanced the short poker back and forth. "I'll tell you," she said, presently. "It was the first time I saw my Auguste kiss another woman. I didn't even know that I loved him. It was his cousin; he had a right to

kiss her ; it had been a habit in the family for years. But that made no difference to me. I was beside myself ; I hated him ; I hated everyone. I felt uglier, fatter, redder than I ever felt in my life. Oh, yes ; I know that Auguste loves me for my good heart—for that and my taste in dress, and my gift for cooking. He doesn't love me in the ordinary way ; but his way satisfies me—quite satisfies me. You comprehend, my child ? ” She paused and put the poker back into its brass holder. “ Yes, that was the angriest moment of my life,” she repeated.

Jean sat quite still, gazing into the fire until her eyes felt hot.

“ But,” she said, after a pause, “ you said it made you hate him. Why did you hate him ? ”

“ Because I loved him,” replied the other, simply.

“ You—you loved him, and that made you hate him ? ”

“Certainly, petite. You see you are a jeune fille. These matters can’t be explained to you satisfactorily. When one loves one sometimes hates, and when one hates one sometimes loves. It happens all at the time. Why, often one finds out that one loves in that way!—often, often! You don’t think of a man, except perhaps as a bel homme; you don’t talk to him; you don’t care where he goes or from whence he comes, or what women he speaks with, and, pouf! all at once you hate him; and then, nine times out of ten, you may be sure you love him.”

Jean’s heart beat furiously; her hands grew cold, her lips dry.

“But why? but why?” she kept repeating in a thick voice.

“Why? it’s as evident as Carnot! Voilà! A man doesn’t make you feel. Suddenly he makes you feel. There it is in two sentences. If he can’t make you feel he is noth-

ing to you; if he can make you feel he is something to you. I wouldn't cry over my ruined clothes for the sake of Boulanger, hein?" She opened her smooth lips in a great whispering laugh, which showed both rows of teeth far back, and the pink cushion of her large tongue.

"But to love and to hate together, it's impossible!" said Jean. "You—you couldn't hate and love like that at the same time; it's like the verse about God and mammon; it's nonsense, it's nonsense," she cried, growing excited all of a sudden. She got up and ran to the window, jerking it open. "It's like an oven in here!" she said. The noise of the street below rushed in on a gush of cold air. One could see the long shafts of the electric light on the Tour Eiffel turning slowly through the velvety-gray air, like the spokes of an immense wheel of white fire. A cab horse stumbled and slipped on the muddy street below. The cabman's harsh

oath and the slash of his whip sounded sharp on the damp air.

“Voyons !” called Madame Vamousin, “come away from that death-hole, chérie, or you’ll soon be where you can neither hate nor love.”

Jean closed the window and came back again, with her little strong fingers knit together behind her head, which was bent back upon them, her gold-colored eyes fastened on the ceiling.

“It can’t be ; it’s absurd,” she was repeating over and over.

Maman Cici sat with lazy good-nature working her heels in and out of her gray felt slippers in front of the whiffing blaze.

“Ah, well ! ah, well ! You shall talk to me about it in three years, petite,” she said wisely. “I have seen life ; I know. I have married a man of twenty-six, and I was fifty my last birthday. I am honest, hein, chérie ? I know what it is to look for the gray hairs in

my head and find them ; and to look for the gray hairs in his head and not find them ! I know what it is to wish every pretty woman in the world dead, dead, dead—and buried too ; and yet to love them after all. I am as bad as a man for that. I have always adored beauty. You know my Auguste.”

“But to love a man and to hate him, all at once, it is as though you said, ‘I feel very well to-day ; I will walk and ride to the Bon Marché at the same time.’ It is just exactly like that.”

“But no, not at all !” said Madame Vamousin.

“It is, it is !” cried Jean. She stamped her foot. Her eyes were brilliant, the pupils so dilated that about them there was only a narrow band of gold like a fairy wedding-ring.

“It is !” she cried again, “and when I hate once I hate forever, let me tell you, Maman Cici.” She came a step nearer to

the placid great figure by the fire. "And when I hate, I hate!" She stood still a second, quivering, then rushed from the room, slamming the door behind her.

"Oh! là, là!" said Maman Cici, turning ponderously to stare at the blank door.

CHAPTER V.

JEAN rushed up the dark stairs two steps at a time, to her room door, which she tore open with a violent gesture. A flare of yellow-red light enveloped her; Venus had made a genuine negro's fire in the little grate, and was toasting the bread for their supper. An old German tea-kettle of dark copper tottled and sang on the hob. Upon the soft mass made by the black girl's skirts a little white Italian wolf-dog had established himself. All looked bright, gay, home-like; and somehow she was soothed by the sight of Venus with her blue head-kerchief, her blue gingham apron, her busy black hands her serious, scorching face. It reminded her of Virginia, and of her small bed-

room next to her Aunt Hetty's, where in the autumn she and Venus used to toast chestnuts on the hearth under a great heap of wood ashes.

This room was larger than that one and had been bare and white. A square of blue Algerian stuff, bought for twenty francs at the Louvre, at a bargain, lay in the centre of the floor. Sketches in oil and charcoal, the gifts of the different painters in the pension, were pinned about the whitewashed walls. There were two blue-and-white china jugs of nasturtiums in the window, which was draped with curtains of blue and white cretonne at nine sous the yard. A pretty red-serge dressing-gown lay across the foot of the bed, which was covered with the same cretonne as that of the window-curtains. On the shelf at its head lay the violin-case, where Jean could touch it even in her sleep.

She went now and sat down on the floor

beside Venus, taking her slim crossed ankles into both hands. It was sweet to feel that someone loved her as entirely and obstreperously as Venus. It was even in that mood a comfort to know that there was someone who would swear "Yes" or "No" to whatever she said quite impartially, only watching her face to see which word would be most acceptable.

She knew that she had only to say: "Vee, Maman Cici is a horrid old thing, who contradicts every word I utter, and I detest her!" for Venus to reply, earnestly: "Yease, Miss Jean, she sut'ny is!" or: "Vee, I do love Maman Cici; she is really an angel!" to hear the ardent acquiescence: "Now, Miss Jean, honey, yo' is right!" She watched Venus toasting little oval slices of bread and wondered what she would say. She felt angry with Maman Cici, too. With a sudden revulsion of feeling she almost felt angry with Venus

when she thought how sure she would be to say whatever she imagined would please her mistress—never what was really in her mind.

“Get the violin, Vee,” she said, suddenly, “and let’s sing ‘Rise up in de chariot early in de mornin’.”

“Don’ yo’ wan’ yo’ supper fust ?” asked the girl, surprised.

“No, I don’t; you can eat it all while I am playing. Go on, get it quick !”

Venus took the violin from its case, slowly unwound the white silk handkerchief in which it was always wrapped and handed it to her, saying, at the same time :

“Don’ yo’ wan’ no tea ?”

“No, I don’t. I’m tired; I’m cross. I want you to sing ‘Rise up in de chariot’ with me. You can eat it all. If I’m hungry you can make me some later. Now——”

Distending one of her purple-brown

cheeks with toast and butter in an egg-like lump, Venus joined in the strange hymn:

“ Rise up in dee chayiot—early in dee mawnin’,
Rise up in dee chayiot—early in dee mawnin’,
Rise up in dee chayiot—early in dee mawnin’,
Hope I may jine dee ban’ !

“ Aw, Lord, have mussy on me,
Aw, Lord, have mussy on me,
Aw, Lord, have mussy on me, —
An’ I hope I may jine de ban’ !”

Jean paused a moment between the first and second verses.

“ You’ll choke yourself if you try to eat and sing at the same time,” she said.

“ Well, I’m thoo now,” replied Venus. Then they went on:

“ Wing away to heaben—early in dee mawnin’,” etc.,
through the same mournful repetition of words and air.

Jean sat quite still finally, nursing the

violin in her arms as though it had been a brown baby.

“Is yo’ done?” asked Venus.

“Yes.”

“Yo’ ain’ gwine play no mo’ tuh-night?”

“No, no; I’m tired; don’t talk to me.”

“Nor’m, or co’sse not. But, please’m, play ‘Possum up de Sumion Tree.’”

Jean burst into one of her clear staccato laughs. She played that and two others; then stopped again and said, suddenly:

“Vee, were you ever in love?”

“Me! Lor’m! Nor’m!”

“And what do you think about this, then, Venus? Do you think anyone could hate you and love you at the same time?”

Venus got up and began to put away the toasting-fork and scrape the crumbs into a wooden platter which Jean used to set outside her window for the birds.

“Hit sut’ny is queer yo’ axin’ me dat, Miss Jean,” she said slowly as she walked

to and fro. "I ain't thought uh dat nigger fuh iears an' iears."

"What nigger? What are you talking about?" asked Jean. Her voice was sharp, and the excited look began to come back into her eyes.

"Wait, I'll tell you," said Venus. Then she repeated, solemnly: "Hit sut'ny is, c'ryious you ax me dat question."

She came and sat down on the floor beside her mistress, spreading her blue gingham apron tightly over her drawn-up knees, and wrapping them about with her long arms. She had a great mass of imitation rubies on her black forefinger, which the firelight made gorgeous. Her great, soft eyes swam sentimentally about under their thick lids.

"Miss Jean," she began, in a low voice, impressively, "dey waz a little boy onct when I waz a little gyrl, an' dee way dat boy treat me waz scan'lous. You never see a nigger as wuzn't bawn a fool ack so in yo'

life. He useter heave rocks at me, an' gre't big ole sticks, an' chestnut burrers, an' rakes an' potatoes, an' all whatever he could git he hands on. I 'clare I waz 'fraid to go 'bout! No sooner did dat boy lay eyes on me dan he waz arter me clippity-clip, a-tryin' to bust my head open wid his wickedness. He ack so scan'lous, dee preacher come hissself an ax my ma what make he ack so. An' she say she don' know. Den he go to dee boy's ma and he ax her what make he ack so, and she say 'twuz unbeknownst to her. So time goes on an' I grows up, an' den it all come out! Dat boy, he up an' tell on hissself. He say 'twan nothin' but love make he ack so. He say he love me so he jess had to fling dem rocks an' fence-rails an' chestnut-burrers at me! He say he love me so hard he hate me; an' da's de truf as I'm a livin'! An' when you goes back tuh Charlott'sville you kin see him an' ax him fuh you'se'f, now!"

Jean stared at her excitedly.

“It’s ridiculous!” she said, at last; “it’s ridiculous nonsense! I don’t believe a word of it! How could he hate you and love you at the same time? He couldn’t, he couldn’t if he wanted to. He didn’t love you, I know he didn’t!”

“Miss Jean, honey,” said Venus, still very solemn, “dat nigger did love me—he did love me, he did love me, an’ you can believe me when I says it, ’cause he loves me now this hyer minute, an’ he say he alluz will!”

CHAPTER VI.

JEAN got up slowly from the floor. She folded the silk handkerchief about the violin and laid it away in its case. Somehow this always reminded her of putting a child into its little coffin. Her eyes stung suddenly with tears.

“You can go to bed, Vee,” she said, in a low voice, “you look sleepy. And shut the door; there’s a draught.”

After Venus had gone she sat down in a deep tapestry chair which the Bensons had given her last Christmas, the dark-red serge, with its Capuchin hood, wrapped about her, her bare feet sunk in the dog’s thick coat for warmth. Her face looked pale and small under the pointed cowl, which she had drawn forward. She sat staring into the

coals, which settled lower and lower in the grate with little tinkling sounds, trying to catch the wheel of her thoughts by one of its whirling spokes and turn it another way, as she had sometimes shut her eyes in a train and forced herself to imagine it moving in the opposite direction. She could not do this. She went on saying the same thing over and over in her mind. Why had she been so angry? Why had she felt like crying out and rushing from the room when he had kissed his wife—that long, long kiss? She could see him now, and shuddered suddenly. Why had she always thought him so handsome, so wonderful? The others did not think so; only she and—his wife. Why had she always remembered every word that he had ever said to her? Why had she always liked him until to-night, and then all at once, when he had—— Why had she felt so angry with Maman Cici for saying that one could hate and love at the same

time? Why had she kept the only note he had ever written her—three lines on a bit of charcoal paper; and why had she left it always in the case with her violin? It was as though another girl, more religious, had put it in her Bible. Why had she learned those few words by heart? They were utterly commonplace, even banal:

“DEAR MISS JEAN: Will you take dinner with us to-day? My wife has made a wonderful oyster-soup out of salsify, and wishes you to share our delight.

“A. FARRANCE.”

She had thought that she valued it for the signature of one who would some day be a great artist. This reason faded away now, as the marvellous inventions of one's dreams become nonsense by daylight. She had kept it because—— She gave a low cry and hid her face in her small, fire-burnt hands. How wicked, how hideous her heart had been for

months without her knowledge. What had happened to her? What dreadful change had been working in her, silently, strongly? Was it this wicked Paris, that sank into one's pores like the stealthy poison of malaria? Was she becoming vile, and conscienceless, just from breathing the same air with those others? She went again to the window, tearing it open, fronting the huge night with her little, slender body. The piles of houses jutted dark, malevolent, against the hollow agate of the sky. Past a circle of mist, the dark skeleton of the Eiffel Tower leaped upward like another Babel, and was lost in a murky cloud. The streets were empty, noiseless; the grimy doors of the closed *portes-cochères* seemed to her like the silent jaws of tombs where the wicked are buried. The horror of Paris came upon her. She thought of the crimes progressing, throb by throb, under those callous roofs. She thought how somewhere some poor wretch was perhaps

being strangled or hacked to death with the first thing that came to hand. She remembered that someone had told her only the day before : “ There is an average of two murders a week in Paris.” Two murders a week—two murders ! Twice a week there was some poor creature who for one crashing instant said to himself or herself, “ I am one of the two murders this week ! I am being murdered—I ! I ! I ! ” It might be going on now, behind those black walls opposite, in the street below, in this very Maison Roget ! “ Oh, how little we know of you, you terrible city ! ” thought the child. “ You are worse a thousand times than your worst book ! You are cruel ; you are deadly ! You poison the sons that wish to live in you, but not of you ! You make our hearts black and bad, little by little, without our knowing it ! Oh, if it were only a bright October day in dear Virginia, and Venus and I were going to look for chinca-pins in the red woods ! If it were a clear,

blue Sunday, and I were only going to church with Aunt Hetty! and at the door I would stop while I shook the pink dust from her black dress. I can smell those dusty skirts of hers now, and the cologne on her folded pocket-handkerchief, warm from her pocket. Dear Aunt Hetty! so good, so kind! What would she think of me if she could look into my heart to-night? What would she think if she knew that I had not read my Bible for months and months? Oh, I do love God; I do pray to Him; I do believe in Him! But it is just the way I was with Aunt Hetty. I didn't kiss her enough; I didn't hug her and tell her often enough how I loved her. I must think of Him oftener; I must read His words oftener; I must try to go to church sometimes. Oh, dear Father, forgive me! forgive me! Let me wake up to-morrow and find this is a hideous, hideous dream!" She dropped on her knees, staring up into the dim hollow above, and straining her hands



SHE DROPPED ON HER KNEES, STARING UP INTO THE GREAT
HOLLOW ABOVE.—p. 68.

together as though praying physically as well as mentally. "Oh, make me good! make me good!" she said over and over. "I want to be good more than anything. Let me find it a dream! let me! let me! let me!" There came a knock at the door. She sprang to her feet with chattering teeth.

"Who is it?" she said, finally mastering herself.

"It is I," answered the voice of Farrance. "My wife is very ill. She keeps asking for you. She is suffering very much. Will you stay with her while I go for a doctor?"

Jean opened the door at once and they stood looking at each other. He was very pale—as pale as she was. "She is very ill," he said again; "you won't be afraid to stay with her alone?"

"No," answered the girl. She stepped back into her room to blow out the candle, and came out again, closing the door behind her.

“Thank you,” said Farrance. He went after her a step or two as she began to mount the stairs to his apartment. “Thank you,” he repeated; “you are as good as gold, child.”

He heard the little feet pattering swiftly up the dark stairway above, but no answer came back to him. “Good little soul! good little soul!” he said to himself; “I was harsh to her this evening.” He found himself running with all his might through the midnight streets without knowing in what direction. Then he stopped short, thought a moment, and went on rapidly toward the house of a Doctor Girot whom the Bensons had once recommended to him.

Mrs. Farrance held out her arms as Jean entered. “Dear, dear girl!” she said, gaspingly. She was propped up among the pillows, her nightgown open at the throat, her hair tangled about her ghastly face. “Feel how cold my feet are,” she whispered. “Do you think I am dying, Jean?”

"Oh, no! no! no! no!" cried the girl, clasping her; "it's the reaction from this evening. I will rub you. Have you any mustard-leaves?"

She put several between folds of linen and placed them about on the fragile body, which was covered with a cold sweat. Rolling back the sleeves of her dressing-gown, she knelt down and rubbed the icy feet and legs until the blood began to circulate.

"Dear girl!" murmured the poor woman again. Presently she noticed that Jean's feet were bare.

"Put on my slippers," she said. But they could not be found anywhere.

"Then put on Adrian's," she insisted. To please her Jean went and slipped her delicate, slim feet into the large man's shoes. She came back in them, with a strange, smooth motion, as though wading through something. Her little ankles were like little white flower-stems rising from clods of soil.

“How funny you look,” said the other, laughing. “I wish Adrian could see you.” And she fell into a fit of coughing, during which she clutched Jean until the tender flesh of her arms and breast was bruised under the desperate fingers. As the girl laid her back against the pillows she devoured her face with wide, agonized eyes, which seemed saying audibly: “Don’t let me go! hold me! I depend on you to keep me here, Jean! Death is horrible! hold me fast, fast!”

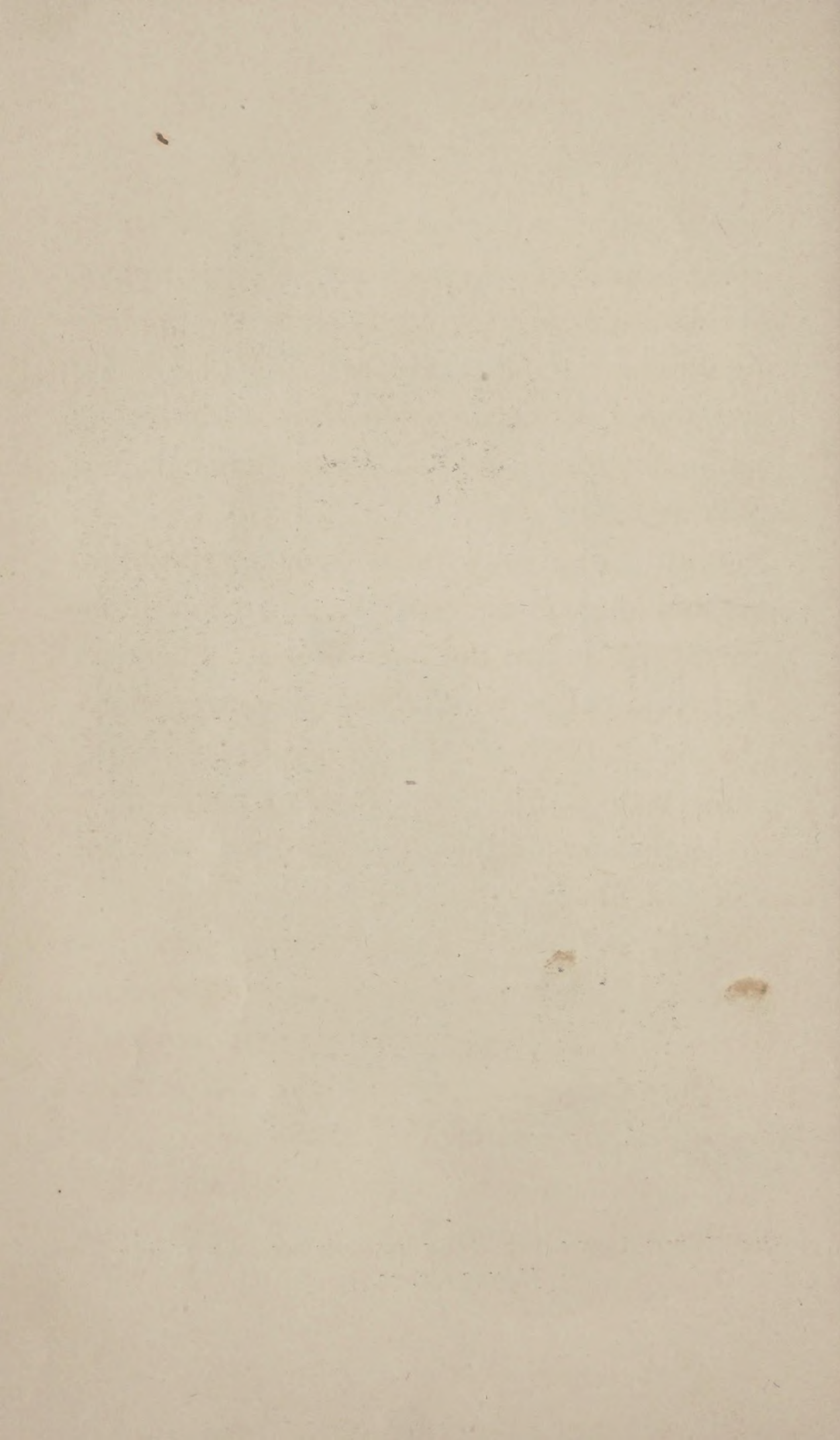
After some moments Jean left her to kindle a fire in the little stove. She boiled some water and made a cupful of Liebig’s beef-tea, into which she put some brandy. Mrs. Farrance drank half of it, and a faint glow came into her white face.

“It is life!” she whispered, with a brilliant smile. “My good little darling!”

“I am not good, I am not good,” said Jean, trembling. She knelt down and took



SHE KNELT DOWN AND TOOK UP ONE OF THE WHITE
HANDS.—p. 72.



up one of the white hands, covering it with kisses, holding it to her heart, which throbbed heavily. "Don't call me good," she implored; "it makes me so unhappy."

"Well, I won't, then," answered the other, smiling; "but you can know what I am thinking."

"Oh, I love you! I love you!" cried the girl, holding her fast with both strong little arms. "You are the best friend I have in the world. I haven't thanked you enough. I haven't told you how I love you. I wish I could bear it for you. I wish I could take all your pain and sadness and let you be well and—happy—happy."

"Oh, my sweet little thing," said the woman, big tears rolling slowly down her face. She put one hand on the roughly curling hair. "My precious child," she said, "you make it so much easier for me."

"I make what easier?" asked Jean, startled.

“Death!” answered the other, gently.

Doctor Girot came and pronounced Jean a remarkable nurse. She had done exactly what he would have done had he come half an hour sooner. Then he wrote a prescription, which he said would soothe the cough, and went away. Farrance came and sat on the other side of the bed and held one of his wife’s hands against his breast. He looked as ill as she did. “I believe if she dies it will kill him,” thought Jean, dully, and then wondered why she did not cry—she was so sorry for them both. They sat that way a long while. Suddenly Mrs. Farrance said:

“She has been like a little angel to me.”

“I know it,” answered Farrance. He put out his slender, dark hand and laid it over Jean’s: “Will you forgive me, dear child, for being rude this evening? I was so wretched.”

She did not look up or reply, and then all at once fell into sharp sobbing. The next

moment she was as quiet as ever. She lifted her eyes and looked, not at him, but at his wife.

“Of course,” she said, in a low voice. “I—I understood perfectly.”

Mrs. Farrance patted her curls again with her thin hand.

“Yes, of course you did, darling,” she whispered. “Adrian is so silly sometimes.” Then added, with a smile: “But you are both too good to me.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day Jean felt so tired that she gave herself the unusual luxury of going to her music-lesson in a cap. She left Venus behind to wait on Mrs. Farrance, and walked slowly past the long array of dingy vehicles and broken-kneed horses at the nearest cab-stand. Most of the wretched-looking brutes were feeding, their scarred noses thrust into bags of oats ; while the others stared vaguely ahead of them with their great meek eyes, which went to the girl's heart. She wished to take them, with their poor bent knees, whip-streaked sides, and jutting hip-bones, into her loving arms and press them to her breast. Poor, patient, hard-working, uncaressed beasts, she thought, there must be a heaven for cab horses somewhere ; and

smiled through the tears which had filled her eyes at a whimsical thought which came to her. She fancied them in that happy place, sleek, gay, sitting on the boxes of golden cabs and lashing into a desperate trot or broken-backed canter the red-faced *cochers* who now belabored them.

She finally chose a cab which had the sign "Chauffée" and a tolerably capable-looking gray between its battered shafts. As the cabby came to the window to receive her directions, a sudden idea possessed her.

"À la Madeleine," she told him, and leaned back, pulling up the window and folding her long cloak closer about her. The glass soon became dimmed with her breath and the warmth of the hot-water tin. Paris went past her in blurred masses of light and shade and color. She tried to put more serious thoughts from her mind, and diverted herself by wondering how she would feel if instead of the musty green cloth about her

had risen a fragrant padding of fine morocco ; if, instead of the cabby's surly back and tattered rug, she could have looked through the clear glass of her coupé at the smart blue coat and crested buttons of a handsome livery ; if before her a little carriage clock in its carefully padded case had been marking the hour of her appointment for lunch at the house of Madame la Marquise de Carrabas. She saw herself dressed in the most charming toilet and wrapped in black fox fur from head to foot. Her gloves were made to order ; her *capote* had been invented specially for her by Petit. She awoke from this dream to find herself before the Madeleine, and her *cocher* quarrelling savagely with a private coachman, who was appealing to a *gardien de la paix* on behalf of his scratched carriage lamp. She dropped the fare into the hand which her cabman extended mechanically, while still abusing the other man, not ceasing for a moment, even while he assured

himself that he had not been cheated by a centime of his *pourboire*. The funeral train of a little child was descending the stairs as she went up. It was a tiny coffin, pure white, and three little children walked on each side, holding the ribbons which were attached to its wreaths of artificial flowers and beads. Two women followed, their arms about each other's waists and thick black veils covering them from head to foot. Jean seemed to feel an actual wave of anguish beat against her as they passed.

"How they are suffering! how they are suffering!" she said to herself, as she entered the great church. ("Oh, how sad, how sad the world is!")

The Madeleine is like a beautiful, noble-looking woman with a trivial heart. Jean shrank back as she entered the jarring interior. She had imagined something dim, prayerful, solemn beyond words. The crimson and gold and many candles pained her.

Still, it was a place where people came to find God ; and she slipped into a row of empty chairs and knelt down, hiding her face. She knelt there a long while without being able to collect her thoughts, which continued to wander on and on as they had done in the cab. Exquisite gowns floated before her. She saw herself in jewels of blue and carmine, as a recognized artiste playing at some great Parisian soirée. She saw the eyes of people fixed with admiration on the lissom rise and fall of the slight arm that drew the bow. She would wear a dress all white, soft ; a row of moonlight-colored pearls around her throat. She would—— Here she heard a voice saying : “ And help me, and help me, and make her well, for Jesus’ sake.” She roused herself and tried again.

What was it that she had come there for ? To ask God to help her to be good. Yes, and to make her dear friend Mrs. Farrance

well, even if she, Jean, had to give her life instead. Yes, and more ; to tell her what to do to keep her heart from growing callous and wicked. Again her mind wandered. She would play Chopin as no one had ever played him. She would make those pretty, worldly eyes shed real tears. She would — All at once a great billow of harmony volumed through the church. It beat against her, as though she had been a rock on the shore and the night tide coming in. The truth rushed over her with those waves of sound—the forgotten truth which held her very life in its core. “ My God, my God ! ” she whispered, panting, “ I love him ! It is an awful sin ; forgive me, let me die ! ” The music seemed to lift her heart from her body and dash it from wall to wall. She shut her eyes and knelt there, trembling, grasping the wooden back of the chair in front of her, as though tossing on an actual sea. “ My God, I will show Thee my heart, naked, naked as

it is! I will not make one excuse; I will not say I did not know! I will tell Thee all, all! I know now, and yet I cannot help it! I love him, I love him! I wish to give my life for her—or I think I do, I think I do! Oh, my God, let it be true that I really want to do it! And yet it comes into my mind—it darts there before I can stop it—the thought that if she dies he may love me! Oh, my God! let me die here now in Thy house, with Thy music about me! I can be good here; I can put it from me; I can be as Thou wouldst have me! I believe, help Thou mine unbelief. Jesus, Lord! say to me as Thou didst to the poor thief: ‘To-day, to-day; not to-morrow, not in a week, a month, a year, but now, to-day, to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise!’ Not even in paradise, dear Lord—only where I can rest, where I can think and have beautiful music, and my love for Thee without this awful fear in my heart. Oh, my Lord! my dear Sav-

your ! I will wait ; I will kneel here until dark, until they turn me out ; only take me, take me ; I'm afraid of myself ! I have only Thee, Thee and my poor Venus ! Oh, poor Venus ! comfort her ; let her feel that it was best to take me. Let them send her back to Virginia, where such things don't happen." A great surge of longing swept her, a madness of longing just to see the dark-red soil and the haze on the autumn hills once more. She started up ; she could not bear it ; she would sail for America in two or three days. But the next moment she had fallen again to her knees. "No, no ! don't listen to me !" she murmured. "Let it be now—this very hour !"

She knelt there a long time, swept by fits of trembling, that she unconsciously likened to quick scales being run over her body by a cold hand. She did not know how many minutes or hours had passed. She felt numb and stiff. The frenzy of emotion had

died out. It was very dark. "I'm hungry," she told herself, astonished. Presently she looked up. It was very dark, except at a side altar to the Virgin, where a woman and a little boy were kneeling before a half-burned candle. Jean went forward a step or two softly. There was no one else in the great place—only they three. She could see that the woman was dressed in thin, worn clothes. The child shivered where he knelt. She took out her little blue silk purse and looked at it in the faded candlelight. There was a ten-franc piece in gold. She went up to the child and bent over him, slipping the gold into his little rough hand. The woman turned, astonished; but when the boy held up the money she stared at Jean, her mouth working, and then broke into noiseless weeping, hiding her face in her apron.

"C'est ma fillette, ma toute petite fillette, ma seule, la seule de ma vie." She stopped



SHE KNELT THERE TREMBLING.—p. 84.

sobbing and looked up pitifully: "Vous êtes trop bonne, ma'mselle; je ne sais —" Her lips began to tremble again; Jean was crying. She put out her small hand, and the woman took it and held it to her breast, then motioned to the child to kiss it. They all spoke in whispers.

"Je vais prier pour elle," said Jean at last, "et vous deux, priez pour moi." She stopped suddenly and touched the woman's forehead with her fresh, trembling lips, then went quickly out of the church. Nothing had happened—nothing, nothing. And yet something must come to her after all those prayers. She saw a flower-stand across the way, under a blue-white electric lamp. The bunches of lilac, hyacinths, jonquils, glared with unnatural colors in the artificial radiance. She went over and chose a great bunch of Parma violets.

"She loves violets," she thought; "and I would take her a white rosebud too, only

I wouldn't have enough to pay for a cab then."

The woman gave her the pale grayish-purple mass in a cornucopia of white paper, and she ran quickly and got into an empty cab which was standing near. All the way home she kept saying to herself: "It will come, it will come; it will tell me what to do. I believe, I believe! I know!" She set her teeth firmly; her eyes were wide and bright. "God did not take me because I have work to do for Him! I was a coward; He didn't want me to die like a coward! But I feel brave now—brave, brave, brave! I should like to do the bravest thing in the world. What could that be? Wait, wait." She dropped back suddenly from her strained upright position; a little voice in her heart had answered: "Confess your sins one to another. Tell his wife that you love him!"

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS. FARRANCE was so much better the next day that she asked Jean to read to her. After listening to one or two chapters, she put out her hand and pressed down the book, behind which half the girl's face was hidden.

"Dear, why are you so pale?" she said. "You look worse than I do. Are you suffering?"

Jean kept her eyes upon the leaves of the book in her lap as she drew her thumb across them with a sharp whirring sound.

"Yes," she said. "No—that is—yes."

"Do you think you took cold the other night?" asked her friend, anxiously. "Won't you take some quinine? There is some in that little box there, near your hand."

Adrian thinks it is necessary in Paris; he takes some every day."

"Oh, it is nothing," Jean assured her. "I didn't sleep very well: my violin lesson went badly to-day."

"My poor little dear!" said Mrs. Farrance, tenderly.

Jean sat quite still for a moment or two, then threw herself on her knees beside the bed and hid her face in the palm of her friend's hand. Her breast beat against the hard wood of the bed as though bursting, but no tears came. She was saying to herself, with ungrammatical insistence: "It isn't me, it isn't me, it isn't me!"

After awhile Mrs. Farrance asked softly: "What are you doing, dear?"

"I'm trying to pray," said Jean.

"But what is the matter? Are you so unhappy? Why, child?"

"I am wicked, wicked!" whispered the girl.

“No, good, good!” contradicted her friend, stroking her bent head. “You are my own dear good little Jean, and you are going to tell me all about it.”

“Yes,” gasped Jean. “Yes,” she repeated, kneeling up and pushing the hair from about her clear face. She lifted Mrs. Farrance’s hand and kissed it strongly, solemnly, three or four times; then put it from her, stroking and smoothing it out upon the crumpled bed-clothes.

“I mustn’t touch you while I tell you,” she said, in a low voice.

“No, dear?” asked the other, surprised.

“No. It is very, very dreadful. It is something you couldn’t think of. But I’m going away; and, please believe it, I do love you!” She gave a short sob. “I do love you—I do!” she said again.

“But, my child——” began her friend.

“You will think I meant to be wicked; but oh! I swear, I swear to you on my

honor—I will put my hand on the Bible if you wish—I never dreamt it was so.” She broke off, and then said, in a thick voice: “It’s two days now.”

“What is?” asked Mrs. Farrance. She had lifted herself up in bed on one arm, and was staring excitedly at the girl. “What are you talking about, Jean?”

Jean knelt there gazing at her without moving. Presently she shut her eyes for a moment, swayed a little. Her hands were clasped so hard that her arms trembled with the strain.

“What is it? what is it?” repeated the other. “Jean! speak! you frighten me!”

Jean opened her eyes again. They were dark, terrified, like the eyes of a dog dragged by its collar.

“Don’t be frightened; don’t, please,” she said; “I’ll tell you now.” She stopped a moment, breathing shortly. Then her voice, suddenly small and strange, like a child’s

voice, said: "I love him—I love your husband. I didn't know it, but I love him." She drew a long, shuddering breath and lifted both hands to her face. She heard the little clock ticking in the next room. She heard Tony stirring and gurgling in his sleep. Her heart seemed beating in her breast, her throat, her forehead, all at the same time. It seemed to her that hours passed. She thought of trivial, silly things; of how Mrs. Farrance had put on her little pink knitted shawl wrong side out, so that the pattern went wrong; of a darn in the counterpane which looked like a cat's head; of how Tony grew cross-eyed when he held the string of gilt beads too close to his dark eyes. Then she thought of her Aunt Hetty, and of how, if she had lived, this terrible thing would never have happened. She felt as though she were kneeling in a great spiral of darkness, which rolled round and round her in thick coils. Suddenly she heard

Mrs. Farrance saying, in a low voice that quivered: "My poor little darling child, come to me!"

She could not see anything when she opened her eyes. She had pressed her hands so tightly over them that the air was full of red whirling specks and great violet splotches that shrivelled and spread again.

"Come here to me, Jean—close," said the other.

"I—I can't see where you are," stammered Jean. She began to move toward the bed, still on her knees. Then she felt herself taken by the frail arms and held fast. She felt kisses, thick, almost passionate, falling on her head.

"My poor baby! my poor little unhappy baby!" said the woman. Then she began kissing and patting her again. She did not speak for a long time.

Jean lay quiet. She felt dazed, as though somehow she had jumped from a vast height

without hurting herself. She could not understand why Mrs. Farrance held her and kissed her. She said to herself dully that it had all to be told over again more clearly; she had not made herself understood.

“Are you awake, Jean?” said the other, suddenly. “You haven’t fainted, have you?”

Jean made a slight movement with her head.

“Then listen to me, darling. You are torturing yourself over nothing. Don’t think I don’t comprehend; but I know just how good and white your heart is; and to love with pure, true love never hurt anyone yet. It isn’t as though you were a woman, dear, and knew all the ways of love. It is different, utterly different. I know how hard it must have been for you to tell me; it was one of the noblest things I ever heard of; it was magnificent! There’s something grand about you, darling! I—I never heard of

anything so touching. I — I——” She stopped, and tears began to roll slowly from her eyes.

Jean lifted her head, her face deathly white.

“You mustn’t be so sorry for me,” she said, her voice breaking a little. “It’s a mistake. I haven’t told you plainly enough. When I found out that I loved him, I thought how—how——” She stopped, and a deep, hot crimson welled into her white face. “I thought how lovely it would be to—to—have him kiss me once—just once—just a touch—like that!”—she let the tip of her finger brush the back of the other’s hand very lightly—“and—and—how I should love to be you!” She got to her feet shivering again. “That’s all. May I go, now?”

“No, darling, you may not,” said Mrs. Farrance. “Kneel down by me here again; I must talk to you a long time.”

“I—I don’t think I can bear it,” whispered Jean.

“ Yes, you can, dear. I will soothe you and show you your own heart ; yes, and a little piece of mine that I have never shown anyone. In the first place, dear, it isn’t as though you had been nursing and indulging this feeling. As soon as you found out about it you were horrified. How you must have suffered, poor baby ! ”

“ Yes—a great deal,” said Jean.

“ You had no one to go to ; you did not know what to do ; you thought you were one of the wickedest people in the world ? ”

“ Yes—yes ! ”

“ Then you determined to do the hardest thing that you could think of ? ”

“ And because it says, ‘ Confess ye your sins.’ ”

Mrs. Farrance put her hand over her eyes and lay quite still for a moment.

“ Jean,” she said, finally, “ what has given you the greatest pain in all this ? The thought of wronging me, wasn’t it ? ”

“Yes,” said the girl.

Mrs. Farrance lay still again for several moments and then said: “Go and open that drawer there and look for a little flat olive-wood box. The key is in the next drawer between the silk handkerchiefs. Now bring them to me.”

The girl did as she was told, and as she laid them on the bed, Mrs. Farrance put her hand on the carved top of the little box. A faint, bright color had come into her face.

“You will see how I trust you and believe in you when I have shown you what is in this box,” she said. “No one else in the world knows anything about it. But go and lock the door first.”

When Jean came back Mrs. Farrance kissed the little key and then put it in the lock. When she lifted the lid Jean saw a yellowed photograph, two letters, and what looked like an artificial orange flower.

“Will you look at that face, dear, and take

it to the light—it is too dark over here—then come and tell me what you think of it.”

She leaned back against the pillows, pressing one of the letters to her lips from time to time, until Jean returned.

“ I think it is beautiful,” said the girl. “ It looks good, too,” she added.

Mrs. Farrance smiled, took it from Jean’s hand, and tried to make out the features in the gray light. She could not do this, and laid it on her breast with the letter.

“ I suppose you have guessed, dear ? ” she said. “ That is the man I have loved all my life.”

Jean looked at her wildly, but could not speak.

“ I never loved anyone else—really—as one wants to love,” Mrs. Farrance continued. “ I have a true, true affection for my husband. He is dear ; yes, I love him dearly, and I have pretended to love him more than I do for his own sake.”

"He worships you," said Jean, stammering.

"Yes, I know. I have tried, tried, tried; there's no use. (When one does not love a man at first—in that way—in the one way—one need never try—never, never.)"

The clock ticked on slowly for several minutes.

"But why did you——" began the girl.

"No one did anything," answered her friend. "That is the way it happens oftenest. I had a sister. She was so beautiful; younger than I was. She came home from school. It was so near my marriage that I had bought my wedding-dress and veil and wreath." Jean knew what the orange flower in the little box meant now. "They did not do a thing; but I felt—I felt it. Then—— I don't think I can talk any more about it now; but I have comforted you, dear?"

Jean covered her face, her arms, her hands with wild kisses.

“ Oh, I am so glad I have not hurt you ! Oh, I do thank God I have not hurt you ! ” she gasped. “ But what difference does it make with me ? I am wicked, wicked, wicked all the same ! ”

“ Suppose I told you that I was glad—thankful to you for loving him ? ”

“ Oh ! ” Jean shrank away bewildered.

“ My dear little child, look at me ; it must be written on my face, I think. Yes, it is there. And after ? Do you suppose I haven't thought with agony what will become of my poor, poor little boy without any woman to care for him ; and of my Adrian ? Oh, Jean ! ” she cried out, suddenly breaking down, “ life is terrible, but death is worse—worse ! I am afraid of it ! Oh, I am so afraid of it ! ” She clung to the girl, strangling with sobs. “ I try to think of heaven, and how lovely it will be, with great fields and rivers and lovely flowers, and how our souls will go there. And then—then I seem

to see the whole world sliced in two, and look into all the graves that have ever been dug; and I see—— O God! why cannot our bodies be taken with our souls? I am a coward—a coward! I think of it, and it frightens me so that I feel like tearing my flesh with my hands! I feel it in the room; it comes and stands by me! My God, how horrible is all this! Jean, light the candles—light all the candles; bring your violin and Venus and play me some jigs, some negro dances. Dance for me yourself, Jean; dance ‘Pretty little Lula.’ Make it bright and gay. Wake up Tony; he has slept long enough. He looks ghastly lying there on his back in this dim light. Ah, there is Adrian at the door! Let him in, Jean—let him in quick, and get him to help you light the candles!”

Jean rushed to the door, her heart seeming to push her on with its savage throbs. She fumbled with the lock blindly.

“What is the matter?” asked Farrance,

in a startled voice, from the other side of the door.

“Nothing—nothing at all,” she called gayly; then opened the door, stood for a second gazing at him with a forced, piteous smile, and then swung forward against him. She had fainted for the first time in her life.

CHAPTER IX.

THREE weeks later Mrs. Farrance died quietly in her sleep one Sunday afternoon. Maman Cici dressed her in her loveliest nightgown of pure white, and tied it at the throat and wrist with satin ribbon. It was Jean, however, who brushed the long, pale-yellow hair. She thought, while she was doing this, of how strange it was that she had never seen death before and yet was not afraid. She arranged the short curls over the forehead as her friend had worn them in life, pinning them into place at the side with little hairpins. The dead woman's face was sweet and tranquil. She looked much younger than she had looked in life; more like a girl, and happier. Her lips wore the sweet, almost affected-looking, smile of

death. Jean bent over and kissed the pale cheek. She had heard much of the horror of death, of its unearthly chill, its moisture. She was astonished to feel, under her kiss, only a smooth coldness as one who has been walking in the winter air. She kissed her again two or three times and then sat holding the fragile hand until it grew quite warm in hers. Suddenly a thought came to her, and she rose and got the little olive-wood box and put it between Mrs. Farrance's breast and arm, where no one could see it, afterward drawing the thick swaths of hair over it with loving precaution. Maman Cici had gone away to make herself a cup of chocolate.

After a while Farrance came in and sat down on the other side of the coffin. Jean rose to go.

"No, child," he said, putting out his hand. "You quiet me, and she would like it."

The girl sat down again silently. In spite

of her sorrow, she felt more tranquil than she had done for many days. The anxiety and nursing of the past three weeks had somehow done away with her feeling for Farrance. She looked at him now with a great aching pity, and wondered how she could ever have imagined herself in love with him. She was so thankful that she wished to put her lips to his dead wife's ear and whisper it to her, feeling as though she had suddenly been washed as white as snow. A man who dreams that he has committed a murder, and wakes suddenly, feels as this child felt.

She remembered something that Mrs. Farrance had said to her several times, and moved her head quietly in negation, with her eyes on the quiet face. She could care for Tony without marrying his father; besides, he would never care for anyone again. She would be good to him, like a little daughter, and try to divert him after the first strength

of his grief had passed. He in the meantime sat quite silent, one hand ceaselessly stroking the band of hair that lay over the calm breast with its covering of Maman Cici's finest embroidery. His hand looked darker than ever against the blue-white of the delicate cambric and the wax-white of the smiling face. He had taken off his wife's rings and put them on his own fingers. They looked odd and out of place—a little turquoise with pearls about it, a hoop of tiny diamonds, two hearts in gold with a ruby arrow pinning them together. They caught once in her hair, and he stooped down and touched them with his lips before unwinding them. Once he bent over and kissed with slow reverence the delicate body, from the quiet head to the pretty feet in their white wedding shoes. They would have put her wedding-gown on her, but she had been obliged long ago to have it dyed blue and made into a coverlet for Tony. When he

came to the little feet he knelt a long time with his face against them.

The girl said to herself: "I know he will die too—he looks so ill. He looks more the way I thought dead people looked than she does."

They sat there all through the night, and when daylight came he looked over at Jean and said: "Thank you, dear. You have helped me. You had better sleep now."

Jean bent over and kissed her once more, taking up two or three of the white violets which covered her.

"Thank you for loving her so much," said Farrance. "You helped her, too—she told me so."

Jean could not speak. She began to sob piteously for the first time. She could not think afterward how she had found her way to her own room without hurting herself, she was so blind with tears and grief. It seemed to her that if she had prayed a little harder

and nursed her a little more carefully, had loved her a little more strongly, she could have kept her alive.

The funeral took place next day at twelve o'clock. Jean had never been to a funeral before. When they were half way through the service she found that she could not endure it, and went out, waiting in the church door until it should be over. The vague murmur of the clergyman's voice followed her, drowned every now and then by the passing of an omnibus or a large wagon from the Louvre or the Bon Marché. Then she heard them singing the dead woman's favorite hymn. She began to sob again and ran a little way along the street in an unconscious effort to get away from the sound which wrung her heart. A man without any legs worked himself to her side and held up his hand.

"I haven't any money — I haven't any money," she said, crying. It seemed to her

that she could never forget the disappointment and reproach in those dull eyes. She ran after him and put in his hand a little plain gold bracelet which she had worn since her childhood. As she went quickly away again, the man stared after her, bewildered. She glanced back and saw him dangling the bracelet on his dirty forefinger and looking from it to her with the same stupefied expression. Suddenly he jerked off his old fur cap and bent his maimed body up and down in grotesque signs of gratitude.

When she looked up again they were coming out of the church. It had been snowing for some time, and the white flakes still fell with a kind of delicate deliberation. The flowers on the coffin were covered with them. Overhead the sky grew darker and darker. The sparrows gathered with shrill twitterings in the bare horse-chestnut trees, or hopped anxiously about over the pavement, leaving tiny, three-pointed marks in

the snow, and the cemetery looked desolately calm in its untrodden whiteness, with its great wreath-hung crosses and monuments cutting against the dim sky. Only about the newly-opened grave were flowers, purple and white ; and Mrs. Benson and her husband stooped down and threw in more, until the dark earth was hidden with them. When they began to lower the coffin Farrance staggered and fell on his knees. His face was terrible, but he made no motion, only knelt there staring at the narrow opening in the winter ground, and the ropes straining against its sides. The others dropped in the rest of the flowers softly, until the grave was full. Then Benson's little son, a boy of twelve, threw in the first shovelful of earth. It did not make the horrible, dull sound that is usual, falling as it did upon the armfuls of white hyacinths and lilacs. Jean stood on the other side, looking from the grave to Farrance and back again.

How could she have thought she loved him? She said this over and over to herself until it lost all meaning. At first it had sounded blasphemous to her, as though it was shameful to think of love in the face of that awful grief.

They left the grave a sweet mound of violets and lilacs, and followed Benson as he half carried Farrance to one of the cabs.

"Alone?" he said, as he helped him into it. Farrance nodded.

"Anywhere particularly?" said Benson, once more. He took the other's hand and gripped it hard.

"Thank you," said Farrance. His hand fell back lifelessly upon his knee. He saw suddenly that Benson was waiting for something, and roused himself.

"Tell him to go anywhere. I should like to drive for about two hours. Tell him I will give him a *bon pourboire*."

Benson explained to the cabman in a low

tone, and he drove on a little ahead of the others, then turned at the corner of the street and they lost sight of him.

Mrs. Benson and Ellen Ferguson, the pupil of the sand-papered school, found themselves together on the drive home.

"I can't help thinking of that poor little baby," said the woman, presently. "What will become of him?"

"Jean will take care of him. She loves him," answered the girl, who was still crying quietly.

"Yes, but——" said Mrs. Benson. She pulled her feet up under her skirts for greater warmth and sat silent for a moment or two, looking out of the window on her side. "Do you know, I shouldn't wonder at all if he married her," she said, suddenly.

"He? Who?" asked Ellen, startled.

"Farrance," replied the other. "I should not wonder at all if he married Jean."

"Oh!" cried the girl, shocked, "Mrs.

Benson, how can you? I can see that poor man's face now."

"It's nothing," Mrs. Benson said, calmly. "It's done every day of the world. He'll never love anyone as he did poor Lilian, but—he'll love."

"I don't believe it! I don't believe it!" said the girl. "And how could Jean marry him even if she loved him, after seeing him—so?"

"You forget things like that, or when you remember them afterward it's different," answered Mrs. Benson. "A man must love or think he's loving—it's the same thing to them."

They had reached the Maison Roget and were getting out of the cab.

"I think it's dreadful!" exclaimed Miss Ferguson. "I do," she repeated, as Mrs. Benson looked back at her, shaking her head thoughtfully.

She ran upstairs quickly, telling herself that Mrs. Benson was a very coarse woman.



SHE PRACTISED HER VIOLIN.—p. 113.

CHAPTER X.

FOR some months after Mrs. Farrance's death Jean lost her sense of reality of life. She came and went, ate her meals, called on the people in the house, helped Mrs. Benson care for Tony, practised her violin, listened to the moralizings of Maman Cici, all with a vague feeling that the next day it would change, or the next, or if not then, certainly the day after. Farrance had gone away for awhile; he had gone alone, and as the weeks passed without bringing him Jean said to herself, "He has killed himself," and wondered why she felt so callous about it. "I can't really have a heart," she thought. "I care for music and I did care for her; and now she's dead, and I don't care for anything much—not even Tony!"

She grew pale, stayed in her room a great

deal, never whistled or sang on her way up and down stairs as she used to do. Venus was very miserable about her and threatened to write home to "dee folks." The others said she had "run herself down" nursing Mrs. Farrance.

About this time Maman Cici, too, became very unhappy. Vamousin grew irregular in his visits to her, and she was consumed with a helpless jealousy.

One day Jean went into her room and found her brooding over an illustrated paper. As she entered, the other turned to one side, slipping the sheet under a pile of fashion-plates on the table.

"What is the matter, Maman Cici?" asked the girl. "You look ill."

"Nothing, nothing at all," said the other, trying to put a cheerful ring into her voice. Suddenly she whirled about and drew forth the paper, holding it close to Jean's eyes in her fat, shaking hands.

“There ! there !” she cried. “Look at it ! Look at it ! It’s exactly what I should do in the same case. Exactly ! I’ve been thinking it over calmly, and I know I should do exactly the same thing.”

Jean took the paper from her and saw that it was a brutal drawing of an enraged woman stabbing a man who seemed to be opening a door.

“Yes, it’s terrible, I know,” said the woman, her face violet under its rough gray hair ; “but it’s better to be terrible than ridiculous. It is, I tell you !” as she saw the dissent in Jean’s eyes. “I would stab him ; yes, as one sticks a needle through a flea. He would not die—il crèverait comme un chien. Yes, I tell you—yes, yes, yes, she did perfectly right, that woman. Her husband was false. She had him watched. She found out. She went to the place—he opened the door for her—oh, yes ; le bon Dieu este juste surtout—he opened the door

and she made an end of him ; v'là ! she was right. I could embrace her, that woman ! I could take her in my arms and kiss her ! I could kiss the hand she stabbed him with, false rat that he was !” She stopped, hideous with jealousy, her great, uncorseted bulk heaving with rage, her eyes distended, her trembling mouth half open. Jean was a brave child. She grew pale, but sat there quite calmly, folding the paper over her knee, and pressing her full lips together in firm disapproval.

“ It is never right to kill,” she said in a quiet voice. “ I shouldn’t like to kill even a real rat, me ! ”

The great creature laughed out at this.

“ You baby ! What do you know about it ? ” she said. “ You know nothing—nothing at all. Pas ça ! ” She drew her thumbnail outward with a sharp sound from against one of her front teeth. “ Pas ça ! ” she repeated. “ You are a pretty baby ! ”

Suddenly she dropped down again into her chair, leaning her head against the pile of fashion papers, while hot tears gushed from her eyes, already swollen with weeping.

“O mon Dieu ! O mon Dieu ! que je souffre !” she panted.

Jean came and took up one of the flaccid, tremulous hands and patted it.

“Poor Maman Cici — poor thing — poor thing !” she said, soothingly. “I’m sure you’re making yourself unhappy without cause.”

The woman sat upright, putting back her tumbled hair with one hand, leaving the other in Jean’s grasp. Her dressing-gown had fallen apart, disclosing one of the elaborate chemises and a petticoat of flowered silk. Her great pendulous cheeks were drawn and puckered with hysterical anguish, her blue eyes had almost disappeared behind their inflamed lids ; and yet as Jean looked up at her she felt no desire to laugh ;

she had rather to restrain herself from shuddering, so real, so terrible was this grotesque despair and jealousy.

“What can you know? What can you know?” the other kept repeating. “Because I am fat and gray-haired, and look frightful when I cry, haven’t I a right to love and be jealous? It is because I am older than he is that he makes me absurd, that he turns away from me. Oh, when I was young, you would not think it, but I had the prettiest waist—the prettiest little waist—smaller than yours—smaller than anyone’s in this pension. I was slim and white—white like a pocket-handkerchief. Oh, my God, to have known him thirty years ago! And yet how could I? I shall go mad. He was only six years old then—a little thing in a shirt, playing in the Bois on Sunday. O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! how terrible it is to be old—to be fat—to be ugly. I have a heart more loving, more passionate than any

fillette in the whole world, and yet what good does it do to me in this dreadful body? I am like someone in a prison, in a dungeon. I am like the story you read me about the man's soul that went into the dog's body. Oh, no, no! Worse than that, worse than that; for then I could follow him, I could lick his hand, I could jump at the throat of that other——" She stood in the centre of the room, transformed, awful, with such agony on her face that the girl was silent before it, hiding her eyes for a minute and whispering God to forgive, to have mercy. When she looked up Maman Cici was coming toward her, trembling, but quieter.

"I have frightened you, pauvre petite," she said—she tried to smile. "I frighten myself," she added. Then she went to the toilet-table and, taking up a brush, began to smooth her divided hair. Her flushed, swollen face confronted her and she drew back, growing pale.

“My God! how ugly I am!” she exclaimed, in a heart-broken voice, “and so old—and so old.” She looked around at Jean. “How terrible is truth!” she said. “I wish so much to die.”

“Yes, it is the best,” said Jean, sorrowfully.

Maman Cici went back to the glass as though drawn there by some hypnotizing force. She looked at herself for some time; then she spoke to Jean without turning around.

“I wonder,” she said, “if God placed beauty there on that pincushion, and eternal blessedness there in that bottle, I wonder which I should choose. I mean, of course, if one could finish afterward like a cat or a dog—not be sent to hell, you understand?”

“Yes,” said Jean.

“Which would you take, child?”

“I would take death even without eternal blessedness,” said the girl.

“ But if you were not pretty, and if you loved someone—if you were married to someone who didn’t love you, but whom you adored—what then ? ”

“ Death—always,” answered Jean.

“ But, little goose, with beauty one could force a man to love one.”

“ Not always.”

“ Hein ? Not always ? Yes, always, always ! ”

“ No, I don’t think so. At least, it isn’t what I mean by love.”

“ No ? What then do you mean by love ? Come, tell me, chérie.”

“ I cannot, I don’t know how to tell it.”

Maman Cici continued to look at her reflection a moment or two longer.

“ Pouf ! ” she said, finally ; “ I don’t know the American ideas of love—how should I ? I’m French to my finger-nails. But if beauty were there on my pincushion, by to-morrow night I should make Auguste Vamousin mad

with love of me—absolument fou, toqué!
That is, with French love,” she laughed bitterly, and came back to her chair by the table.

CHAPTER XI.

JEAN was not astonished, two or three days later, on finding Madame Vamousin in a state of frenzy even worse than the other. There had been a good deal of half-laughing gossip in the pension, regarding the young coachman and his elderly wife. Benson expressed it that Auguste was "off on a tear." Mrs. Benson laughed and said that Ellen Ferguson had seen him walking on one of the side paths in the Bois with a very pretty girl in a plaid dress. Jean had not laughed with the others, and felt troubled when she thought of this talk reaching the ears of Man Cici.

"Poor thing," she said to herself, "I dare say it's all true, but what's the use? She's miserable enough as it is." So she took her

violin with her this time, thinking that she would divert the other with some lively music and the favorite tunes of Vamousin.

Maman Cici met her at the door, her face livid, her bonnet falling from her head, trying with wild fingers to clasp her large circular cloak of beige cloth at her throat.

“But, Maman Cici, where are you going? It’s so late. Do stop just for a minute! Here comes Mrs. Benson and she does talk so.”

The woman at these words allowed herself to be pushed back, and leaned against the wall, trembling from head to foot.

“There—there,” she said, finally, in answer to Jean’s questions. “There on the table; look—look for yourself! I have had him followed, as that woman did. He will be with her to-night at that café. I even know the number of the room. O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! After all, how droll it is. I must laugh—I must, I tell you!” She

burst into a peal of her rich chuckling laughter, as though really amused, but her face was ghastly. Jean read the slip of blue paper on the table. It was a curt business telegram.

“The woman’s name is Valérie Gule. He will dine with her to-night at the Café des Trois Fées. Cabinet particulier, No. 9.

“ROMINET.”

“I suppose Rominet is a detective?” said Jean, looking up.

“Yes, yes,” answered Maman Cici, stopping to wipe her eyes and the corners of her twitching mouth. “But I must go—quickly! Open the door. She must be gone now, that Benson.”

Jean pretended to listen.

“No, there’s someone else. Just wait a minute, Maman Cici. You must be careful. They may follow you.”

“So they may, so they may,” assented the woman. “Yes, I must be very careful. If he comes to the door I shall do it quick—like that.” She jerked something from her breast and thrust at the air with it. It was a knife. Jean nodded quietly, then paused a moment as if thinking.

“I’ll tell you what I’d do, Maman Cici, if I were in your place,” she said. “I’d rush by him at the door and kill her before his eyes. Think of it. What a punishment, hein?”

“Good!” cried Madame Vamousin. “Clever little cat. Clever little darling. A splendid idea. But come now—you are going with me?”

“Oh, yes, of course. I must protect you, if necessary, and say that you were with me somewhere else after the murder.”

She looked steadily into Maman Cici’s bloodshot eyes. There was an overturned liquor-bottle on the table, and she knew that the woman was inflamed with cognac as well

as jealousy. At the word "murder" Maman Cici's frenzied look subsided a little.

"To kill in a cause like this isn't murder," she said, at last, suddenly. "It's the Code Napoléon."

The blood rushed into her face again. "Yes, it's the Code Napoléon!" she shouted, in a thick voice. "I will kill, kill, kill her! He was a great man. It was his law. I will kill her, I will kill her, and then when she is dead I will kill her again—so!" She stamped and ground her heel into the carpet as though crushing some half-alive thing. Jean watched her, fascinated, shuddering.

"Well," she said, presently, "of course you know best; but I should much rather choke anyone I hated than stab them."

"Choke them?" repeated Madame Vamousin, slowly. "Choke them? With one's fingers, hein? I hadn't thought of that."

She held out the knife suddenly to Jean.

"There," she said, "you take that in case

they attack us, and I'll manage the little snake's throat." She curled her huge fingers as though grasping something invisible and looked at them lovingly. Jean took the knife and put it in her breast.

"Lend me a cloak, Maman Cici," she said; "I don't want to take time to get my own, and it's very cold." She put on the long cloak the other found for her, and tied the silk handkerchief from about her throat over her head. Then they went out, got into a cab and drove off toward the "Trois Fées." Once on her way there Maman Cici became dull and silent, and Jean was left to her thoughts. Perhaps this was one of the two murders this week and she would witness it. She bit her lip so that the pain confused her for an instant. Then she collected herself and tried to plan what she would do. She would cry to Vamousin and his mistress to help her, and they three would overpower Maman Cici and tie her hands. But how to

be quick enough ! Those enormous women are active as cats sometimes. Suppose she really choked the girl to death, what then ? Awful pictures of Maman Cici's huge gray head falling under the knife of the guillotine in the early morning haunted and sickened her. She could not think. Her ideas got more and more tangled. At least she had managed to get the knife away. It was savagely cold. Her teeth began to chatter. She looked at the woman beside her. The sudden change from the overheated room to the freezing air had made her drowsy ; her broad face hung swaying from side to side over her breast.

“ Thank God ! Thank God ! She will sleep it off ! ” she was telling herself, when, with a jar and a scraping of the wheels against the curbstone, the cab drew up before the “ Trois Fées.” Maman Cici was roused and alert in an instant. She got from the cab, paid the man his fare, and he drove

off, leaving them standing there in the gloomy side street. The café was not a gay-looking one. There did not seem to be much business going on. When they entered the dining-room there were only two men supping meagrely upon cold ham, bread, and beer, in a distant corner, and reading their papers while they ate. Maman Cici pushed open a door to the left and went up the first pair of stairs which she came to. "Number 9! Number 9!" she kept on saying to herself, in a sort of monotone. Behind one or two of the doors which they passed there seemed to be the gayest parties. Jean heard the voices of men and women together singing some coarse, comic song. The words reached her in broken snatches between peals of laughter :

" Avec son bonnet de tricot,
Elle a sa rob' couleur pruneau,
Des bas de couleur abricot,
Et des p'tits souliers Godillot."

As they went on, looking from side to side at the different doors, the refrain floated after them, absurd, catching :

“ Il faut la voir le long de la rivière,
Boitant par devant, boitant par derrière,
La jambe droit' qui cloche un tout p'tit peu,
Semble crier : Au feu ! au feu ! au feu !
Pendant que la gauch' lui répond :
Ou donc ? Ou donc ? Ou donc ? ”

Suddenly Jean started forward, tore open a door and rushed into the room. Vamou-sin and the girl had apparently just sat down to dinner. The soup smoked in their plates, and a little dish full of *écrevisse* heads was pushed on one side. Valérie Gule gave a scream and Vamousin got to his feet cursing.

“ Be quick ! She is coming—Maman Cici ! ” Jean heard her voice trying to urge them loudly, but it was as when one tries to shriek in a dream—only husky, whispering sounds escaped her. The next moment

Madame Vamousin dashed into the room, wound both hands in the girl's hair and began beating her head against the table. Jean and Vamousin flung themselves upon her, but she was gigantic in her frenzy. The sound of the girl's head against the wooden table was horrid. Suddenly the blood spurted from a cut in one of her temples made by a bit of broken glass. It gushed over Maman Cici's hands—red, warm. She dropped the girl suddenly and stepped back until she was close against the wall, staring, staring at her outspread hands. Jean ran to the door and locked it.

"You must answer the garçon when he comes," she said to Vamousin. She knelt down and took the girl's head on her knees, sopping a napkin in one of the finger-bowls and bathing her face and forehead. Vamousin held the bowl, quivering all over like an Italian greyhound.

"Is she dead?" he whispered.

“No, I don’t think so,” said Jean.

“Ma pauvre chérie. Ma pauvre, pauvre mignonne,” murmured the man, his teeth chattering.

There was a knock at the door.

“Il ne faut pas entrer, vous savez,” called Vamousin in such a gay voice that Jean started.

They heard the rattle of the dishes as the waiter set them on the floor outside.

“That poor fool there—my wife; I don’t want her—you know,” he said, answering her eyes and drawing his fingers across his throat with an expressive gesture. Jean went on bathing the girl’s head in silence. Suddenly they were startled by a voice near them.

“How pretty she is! How pretty!” said Madame Vamousin. “And so young.” She waited a moment and then pointed at the gash on the girl’s forehead. “Did—I—do—that?” she asked in a slow whisper.

“Oui—c’était bien toi,” growled her husband.

“I’m sorry,” she said, dully ; “what’s the use ?”

“Go away !” said Vamousin, brutally. “Go away. You’re drunk. Go away and go to sleep.”

She went meekly and sat down at the table, watching them.

After awhile she lifted a spoonful of the soup mechanically to her lips, but dropped the spoon with a clatter.

“Eh, mon Dieu ! my poor Auguste, what cooking !”

Then she began to stare at the girl again.

“Her hands are littler than yours, Jeanne.”

Jean said nothing ; the girl had given a little sigh. She felt as though she must scream aloud with exultation.

“And she has lighter hair than yours,” said Madame Vamousin.

"She's alive! She's alive!" Vamousin was stammering in a loud whisper. They lifted her a little and she gave a gasp, opening her eyes.

"Ca va mieux, mon adorée?" pleaded Vamousin.

"She is lovely—she is lovely—she is lovely!" said the woman at the table. "My waist was never so small—never."

"Veux-tu te taire?" said Vamousin, roughly.

Maman Cici again tasted the soup absently, then the wine.

"Quel potage! Quel vin!" she said again, shaking her head.

The girl had come to herself. She stared about her wildly. "Auguste!" she cried.

Jean got to her feet.

"I'm going now," she said. "You must think of some explanation." She went to Maman Cici and put her arm about her drooped head.

“ Shall we go, dear ? ” she asked, softly.

“ Yes ! Go, go ! ” assented the other. She got to her feet, staring about her until her eye rested once upon the girl, who was now lying with her head on Vamousin’s knee. She began to tremble and cry pitiously. “ Yes, let us go, dear child,” she said. Then turning at the door : “ How pretty ! Hein ! How pretty, Jeanne ! Prettier than you, my dear.” It was none the less pitiful because the poor old creature was half maudlin with drink.

“ Pretty, pretty,” she kept murmuring to herself. “ Pretty as the picture on a handkerchief box. Eh, mon Dieu, yes—and even prettier.”

CHAPTER XII.

SOMEHOW it seemed to Jean a perfectly natural thing that they should meet Farrance as they were going out of the café. He looked stronger than when she last saw him, and his face less haggard. When he saw Jean, with the heavy figure of Maman Cici dragging on her slender shoulder, he came forward rapidly a step or two with a gesture of entire amazement.

"I will tell you about it afterward," said the girl. "Help me now. Get a cab; I will wait here. Don't be long. She is suffering very much. I'll tell you all about it afterward. Only be quick."

Farrance came back with two cabs.

"Is she really ill?" he asked. "And why is she here? Why are you here?"

“ I will tell you, I will tell you,” said Jean, “ everything. Only let us go now.”

All this time she was holding Maman Cici's cloak together, fearing that one of those blood-marked hands might be seen by Farrance or one of the garçons. Maman Cici seemed dazed and stupid. She got docilely into the cab, the door of which Farrance opened for her. Jean was about to follow, but he held her firmly with the other hand.

“ She is not ill, she is drunk,” he said, in a low voice. “ I will tell the driver to follow. You must come with me in another cab.”

“ She may hurt herself. She may fall down,” said Jean, rather timidly. He pulled up the glass and shut the door of the cab on Maman Cici, who sat quiet, her bonnet falling back from her rough hair, her long cloak making of her figure a large, shapeless bundle.

“ If people in that condition do fall down they are not very apt to hurt themselves,”

he said to Jean in a kind voice, as they turned away together. He took one of the driver's blankets, wrapped it about her knees, then got in beside her, telling the man to drive to the Maison Roget.

As they jarred along over the rough pavements Jean wondered more and more at her own calmness. She felt exhausted and a little dizzy after that scene in the café, but that was all. She was pleased to feel Farrance sitting there, but it was a sober sort of pleasure, as different from gladness as gray is from scarlet. She felt she could tell him all that had happened, and that he would do the best for everyone, and not speak of it in that gossiping pension, where they would probably make a ghastly joke of the whole affair.

She fixed her eyes suddenly upon his face, which was outlined against the murky atmosphere without, and he seemed to feel that she was looking at him, for he turned at once, saying:

“What is it? Do you want to tell me about it now?”

“Yes, you are so good,” said Jean. “I do thank you.”

She lifted suddenly the hand with which he was pulling the blanket closer about her, and kissed it.

“I do thank you,” she said, again.

“Poor child!” said Farrance, “I’m afraid that woman has been getting herself into some terrible scrape. How did she come to drag you along with her—and without gloves?” he added, awaking suddenly to a sense of the icy coldness of the little fingers he had taken in his.

“No, she didn’t drag me,” said Jean. “I went—I had to.” And then she told him about it.

Farrance did not speak for several minutes. Then he lifted her hand and kissed it in his turn.

“My dear,” he said, “I think you are



SHE FIXED HER EYES UPON HIS FACE.—p. 140.

about as brave as anyone I have ever heard of."

"No, not at all. I was very frightened," said Jean.

"Then what you did was all the braver."

Jean was silent. She wondered why such a speech from him had no effect upon her whatever. The idea that perhaps her heart was getting dry and cold frightened her and made her unhappy. Then all at once she thought of his dead wife and the tears came rushing to her eyes. She leaned her head back against the dusty cushions, where the light from the occasional street-lamps would not fall upon her face. She was tired and, strange to say, very sleepy.

She was roused by feeling someone's arms drawn from under her, and looking through a sort of golden shimmer which hung like a veil of thin shot silk between her and the bending faces above, and she saw that she was on her bed in her own room, Far-

rance, Benson, and Venus standing around it.

“Did I—did I——” she said, speaking thickly and feeling herself blush.

“Yes, you did,” answered Benson; “you did, most emphatically. I tell you what, it isn’t fair, is it, Farrance, to look like a sylph and feel like an obelisk? I don’t believe Cleopatra’s needle was anything to you. It took both of us together at least twenty minutes to get you upstairs. I say, hadn’t we better make some tea or something? How do you feel now? Would you like some tea—or what?”

Jean’s blush had died out and she was still very faint and pale. Her tongue seemed to get between her teeth when she tried to speak. She looked at Farrance.

“Is Maman Cici safe?” she asked him.

He told her not to worry herself, that Maman Cici was cared for. “The *concièrge*’s wife is with her,” he added.

“ Oh, the poor old thing,” murmured Jean. Farrance patted her hand kindly.

“ I hope Benson and I haven’t hurt you, dragging you up that crooked stairway,” he went on. “ Will you have some wine ? ”

“ Don’t ask her. She must have it,” cried Benson, plunging at the door, which he flung open with such force that it struck heavily against the bed. “ I’ll bring it in a second,” his voice was heard calling from the hall below.

Farrance sat down on the arm of Jean’s big chintz chair, with one hand in his pocket and the other pulling at his short beard. The little figure on the bed struck him as very piteous and lovely. What a slip of a girl, what a plucky baby to be leading such a life quite alone ! “ How pretty she is,” he told himself ; “ how much too pretty. And what grit, what energy ! It’s that strong little chin of hers. The eyes are soft enough, and the contour of the face, but she’s got a

'devil of a little chin." He remembered how his wife had loved her. It was frightful that she should be entirely by herself in an apartment house in Paris, with a black girl of nineteen for a chaperon and Madame Vamousin for an intimate friend. What would happen to her during the next three years? He looked at the wide, pearly forehead under the ends of bright hair. The words "purity, maidenhood," seemed almost visibly written upon it. The serene, straight eyebrows seemed, in his fantastic thought like under-scorings of the imagined words. How fond Lilian had been of her—the kind, brave, pure little thing! He felt that he could not let her go on with this life which she had planned for herself. It must be prevented somehow. He himself would prevent it, and he kept asking in his heart: "How? how? By what means, by what help, in what way?"

Venus had been filling a bottle with hot water all this time, and put it to her mis-



VENUS HAD BEEN FILLING A BOTTLE WITH HOT WATER.—p. 144.

tress's feet as Benson came back with the wine.

He held it to Jean's lips in a glass which streamed over into the hollow of his other hand, talking to her between gasps while she drank it.

"So sorry—couldn't find keys—Mrs. B.'s gone—theatre—with—all—th' other women—grand treat—stage box—hen party—men snubbed."

"Thank you," said Jean; "thank you both so, so much. I'll go to bed now, I think."

"You're sure you're not going to faint now?" asked Benson, anxiously, shaking his dripping hand, while Farrance got up from the arm of the chair.

"Oh, sure, sure!" she exclaimed, reddening again.

"Good-night, little one," said Farrance, turning back for an instant. "Good-night, Jean—the bravest Jean in Christendom. Sleep well, and don't bother about Maman

Cici. I'll arrange all that. Be sure you sleep well—and sweet dreams !”

“ Good-night,” said Jean.

When he was gone, she could see him standing there as plainly as ever. She felt his kiss on her hand. She flung over so impatiently in the bed that Venus thought her vexed about something.

“ Why did he come back ? ” she kept asking. “ He will take Tony away—and—and—I do love Tony ! ”

CHAPTER XIII.

FARRANCE parted from Benson at the door of Jean's room and went upstairs to his apartment, which he had not visited for eight months, and which he had not allowed to be sublet, as Mrs. Benson had advised. Once a week Jean, with whom he had left the key, went up to open the windows and see that the sketches and drawings were in good condition. Except for this, however, everything was exactly as it had been on the day of Mrs. Farrance's death. Her dressing-gown hung over the foot of the narrow bed, with the pretty bedroom slippers underneath. There was a box of rice-powder on the toilet-table with the swansdown puff, still dusted with powder, lying beside it. Her bottles of different drugs and tonics stood

on the chimney-piece. A lace handkerchief which she had been pinning into a morning-cap lay on a little table beside her easy-chair, with the half-tied bow of pale-blue velvet ribbon beside it. The smell of vervain still clung to everything.

He had lighted a candle and sat down in a smaller chair opposite the other, seeing before him the frail figure which quivered every now and then beneath a short, husky cough ; the broad, downcast lids, the arch irregularity of the lips following with sympathetic movements each turn of the deft, half-transparent fingers. He saw her, heard her ; the strong scent of the vervain made her presence seem still more vivid. He felt no inclination to tears. He felt as a poor wretch must feel when mangled half to death in a railway accident—a desire that some blow would come which might be final. Art looked shrunken and insignificant viewed from his height of grief. He was not a man

who gave or received love easily ; he had not the paternal instinct strongly, and the child was not enough like her to endear itself to him through second causes. He had no especial belief, or, rather, he regarded the possible God as a great machine, dealing out joy and misery impartially in the order which they happened to assume. He did not feel rebellious. Why should he be spared when others suffered ? He believed no more in happiness than he did in God. Even in his wild love for his wife he had not been happy ; there had been some lack, some jarring in their relations with each other. He thought of how she had implored him to go back to the old life of the stage, of how she had yearned for it. The memory of her voice and eyes struck to his heart. It was true that with her delicate health she could never have borne the life, but still—but still—— He got up and walked away from that haunting presence into his studio. The in-

sistent sadness of life seemed stifling, unutterable.

“We can never get away from it,” he thought. “It is like a blood-stain on one of the wheels of the car of life. We are carried on and on, and always, at intervals, as the wheel turns, we see that sorrowful mark. I wish it were over with me and that I were as she is now. After all, what is love? Does it come from us or are we the bits of steel and it the magnet? Is it true, as I think, that I shall never love again? Is it true—as most of us think—that I would be worthier for not loving again? If I loved someone else, would I grow indifferent to Lilian? Suppose, if I were married to that other, that she—Lilian—could come to life and stand before me, which would I choose? Which would any man choose? Why is it that marriage is never happy, and yet that we go on marrying, and will to the end of time? It is prob-

ably as the Roman said: 'Nature has so arranged it that we cannot either live comfortably with wives, or live at all without them.' And yet, merciless God! how blank, dull, objectless, frayed-out it all seems without her!"

He turned sharply from the window by which he had been standing, and his elbow struck against a little writing-desk which had belonged to Lilian and in which she kept letters, notes, trinkets of all sorts. Sitting down before it, he began absent-mindedly to open the different drawers and turn over their contents. There were newspaper cuttings, odds and ends of ribbon, pressed flowers, a knitted shoe stretched on a little wooden tree, some perfumed pastilles, photographs, absurdly grimacing tinctures, a box of rouge. In one division he found a heavy packet of notes and letters tied together. It was labelled: "Letters from Adrian before we were married." He

unfastened the bit of ribbon which bound them and began to read. How long ago and unreal it all seemed! Yet, after all, was not the present the true ghost? Had there not been more zest, more life, more actuality in those far-off days and nights? Sentences in his own yellowed handwriting brought up the past, its fevers, longings, strivings, as with a spell. It was as if one dead could look down upon the quiet body and brood over what it had been. There seems nothing stranger in life than to read again the words which we have written and forgotten, except, perhaps, to look, after many years, upon the face of the one whom we first loved. He remembered the very costumes that they had worn in "Romeo and Juliet," the way that her hair had loosened in the balcony scene under its coif of false pearls. How, in the next act, he had interpolated whispered words of his own between the lines of honeyed blank verse,

words of prose, the shortest, the eagerest, the most impassioned. He recalled them now. She had hung on his shoulder to say the lines beginning: "It is the nightingale and not the lark;" and he had confused her so that she could scarcely continue. Her voice had faltered, he had seen her redden and grow pale under the steady rouge. "I love you, I love you madly; do you hear? madly—madly! You must marry me to-morrow!" He could hear himself uttering that eager whisper as distinctly as he could read, on the musty sheets before him, his own words of seven years past. He could not realize that he had ever trembled with the emotions which they represented. "My God," he had written in one hurried note, "how desperately I love you! It is a frenzy of feeling, it seems to eat to the very marrow of my heart! Last night, as you turned from me in the scene at *Melnotte's* cottage, a knot of ribbon fell from your

dress. I kept it under my pillow all night. It seemed to me that, when I touched it, in some strange way I drew you to me. It has a faint odor of yourself which intoxicates me. When will you marry me? When will you leave this horrible sham of life and give yourself to me utterly? I am jealous of the eyes that tarnish you with their looks of coarse admiration. I can scarcely wait until to-morrow, when we shall walk to that quiet, calm, lovely place outside this wretched little town, and I can tell you with my lips what I so vainly try to write ! ”

He pushed the letter from him and hid his face in his hands, shaken to the heart. They had taken that walk next day, and for the first time she had given him her lips to kiss. It seemed to him when he roused himself half an hour later, that she had been in his arms.

By the time he had looked over the whole package it was midnight, and the bit of paper around the end of the candle was in a blaze.

He lighted another, determining to look over the entire contents of the desk. There might be some papers to be burned, some messages which she had left for others—for him, perhaps. This thought had barely gone through his mind when he came upon a sealed envelope addressed to himself. His heart began to beat heavily and the square of paper trembled in his hand. He gave a sort of groan. The hand that wrote it, the thin, graceful hand, he fancied it moving rapidly over the small sheets, glancing with the rings which he now wore; he saw it again, bare, terrible, resting among the folds of lace and muslin in that grim box, deep under the frozen ground. “What a fiend it must have been to invent dissolution,” he thought savagely. “And they tell us that it was a God, and that He is good!” He kissed the letter quietly and opened it with the blade of his knife, not wishing to tear the paper which she had touched.

It was not a long letter, but he passed an hour in reading it :

“ADRIAN, MY DEAR, DEAR: First of all let me tell you how I love you, how I thank you for your love. You have been so good to me, so good, good, good ! God will bless you for it. He will show you how to love Him. He will make you believe in Him. I pray for it as I have never prayed. Every night and every morning I say: ‘Dear Father, bless my husband who is so noble, who is so kind, who wishes with all his heart to believe in Thee, and give him his heart’s desire.’ When you read this, dear, I shall be gone, but not far, not too far to love you and wish to comfort you as you read. Dear, I have something to say to you, something so hard, so very hard to say in the right way, in the way that will not hurt you. Do you misunderstand, try not to be wounded, try to take it as I mean it, I, who love

you so dearly, so truly, so devotedly, so faithfully. I will not put it off longer, but just tell you simply and candidly, as I know you would wish me to speak. It is this: I have been thinking and thinking how it will be with you when I am gone. How you will live, where, with what people. Of your great loneliness, of our poor little child. I do not do you the injustice to think that you will ever love as you loved me—not in that way; but oh! my dear, don't be angry with me when I tell you that I hope you will love again, yes, love and marry. I cannot bear to think of our boy growing up without one woman to love and care for him before all. It would not be what you might wish, it could not be what the past was to you—oh, believe that I know that, Adrian; but it could help you to live your life and work peacefully at the art you love so. And, Adrian, forgive me; perhaps it cannot be, you may have a feeling about it of which I do not know; but

if it could be, oh ! if it only could be little Jean ! I don't think anyone dreams of the strength and beauty and loftiness of that child's character. She would love you so, she would be so good to my baby, she would help you in your work, in your troubles, in every way ; and then think, dearest, of what it would be for her ! I shudder sometimes when I think of the life that child is leading ; of what she is surrounded by on every side ; of the people she knows : that good-natured but coarse ' Maman Cici ; ' good-hearted but vulgar, sharp, little Mrs. Benson ; kind but stupid Ellen Ferguson ; and only poor black Venus to stand between her and this Paris, full of people who are coarse and wicked without being either good-natured or good-hearted. I love her so tenderly that sometimes I almost wish that something would happen to make her less pretty. If you could only save her from it all and make a quiet, contented home for yourself at the

same time ! Still, as I said, dear, I don't know, of course ; only I beg, I implore you—I, whom you have made so happy for these past seven years—do not misunderstand me, do not imagine that I could dream even for one moment of your ever, ever loving anyone as you loved and love

“ YOUR LILIAN.”

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE week later Farrance knocked at Jean's door.

"Will you come up to my studio for a few moments?" he asked, as she opened it. "I should like to get your advice about something."

She came at once, looking a little puzzled, flushing slightly.

As they entered the room she saw a mass of freshly burned paper choking the fireplace and still smouldering on the hearth. The sketches had all been taken down and rolled or strapped together; the imitation tapestry curtain had gone. On the different chairs had been placed dresses cloaks, hats which she recognized.

"It's about that I want to ask you," said

Farrance. "I've burned everything else—my letters to her, hers to me, everything, even the scrap of paper that she had pinned on a silk handkerchief she gave me my last birthday—even her telegrams. I had kept them, too. I'm glad to say it's all over, but her clothes—somehow, I cannot—I don't know what to do with them."

Jean sat down in one of the chairs and began to smooth the fur trimming of the jacket which hung over its back.

"I—I don't see how you could," she said, at last.

"No, probably not," replied Farrance, with some grimness, "I hope you never may."

Jean was silent again for a few minutes.

"Don't you believe—but you do believe there's a God?" she asked, finally. "You believe you'll see her again?"

"Where there's no marrying or giving in marriage?" asked Farrance, with a laugh.

“But it will be better than that—you will love her more.”

“If I’m to love her in such a different way, she herself might as well be someone else; don’t you think so?”

“No, I believe that we shall see her again, and that she will be the same.”

“Indeed? And how about Tony? He will probably be a strapping, great fellow with a black beard? Don’t you think she’ll be rather puzzled after waiting to see her baby again, to have to welcome him under those conditions? And me? When I greet her with flowing white hair and the cross of the Legion of Honor on my breast?” He laughed again, very harshly.

Jean replied with stoutness: “It has always seemed to me so foolish to try to explain everything. Why, there are lots of things just as puzzling on earth! I will remember Tony as a baby, always, even when he is a man—but that won’t keep me from

loving him and being happy. We all of us have those ghosts. I can see myself now—a fat little thing in a coral necklace and soapy curls. That little child is dead, dead, dead, but I am still I. You will still be you—with or without your white hair. Look at hypnotism. Why could not God hypnotize us to see each other as we would wish? Your wife will see you a man, your mother a child, your child a gray-headed artist. If people can get happiness for a time out of a little bottle of brown stuff like opium, why could not what our Lord called the ‘living waters’ change everything and make us happy, contented, zestful? Oh, I don’t see why people worry themselves about things. If grapes have the instinct to draw sweetness out of the earth, and roses color, why can’t we leave it to that great Power, and believe that he will draw what is best for us out of whatever world we happen to live in?”

She stopped, her breast beating quickly

against her little gown of gray cashmere, her eyes bright and compelling.

“There isn’t enough love in the world,” she exclaimed. “That is the matter. ‘Out of the heart are the issues of life,’ and if we haven’t got hearts—what then?”

Farrance looked at her curiously, roused out of himself.

“It is my heart that makes me so desperate,” he said, in a different tone.

Jean laughed in her turn, a laugh so honest and bitter that he gazed at her with growing wonder.

“Your heart,” she repeated. “Men don’t love with their hearts. Do you think a woman, a child even, would have put those dear words in the fire as you have done? She could not—she could not. Perhaps she might have thrown them overboard in a weighed box into the middle of the sea or have buried them. But she could not have burned them. All? And you have burned all—all?”

On her knees she began to turn about the scraps of paper on the hearth. A word or two showed here and there : " Love," " Adrian, dearest," " only to be with you again," " I am forever, for always."

" How could you? " she said again, passionately. " How different men and women are, how differently they live, love, everything."

" And do you really think, Jean," said Farrance, " that a woman never burned her love letters? "

" I would not," she answered. " No, not even if I had stopped caring for the man who wrote them. It seems too terrible, all those words that meant so much, that came from the core of someone's heart."

Farrance began to smile.

" So you admit that you might stop caring, although you couldn't burn the letters."

" No," she answered, slowly. " I was wrong. I don't believe anyone ever stops

caring. They stop suffering so much, they stop caring in the same way, but the old feeling never quite goes. I am sure of that. I mean, of course, when it has been a real love."

"Even if it hasn't come from the heart?"

"Yes, even then. But you don't understand me."

Farrance put his hand suddenly on her head with a gesture of great feeling.

"You are a dear, dear child," he said. "You help me. She said that you would help me."

They sat without speaking for some moments.

"And about the gowns, Jean," asked Farrance, finally.

"I've been thinking," she answered. "It seems very, very sad, but I should give them to the poor, all but the Parthenia dress—if—if you would let me keep that?"

"You can have anything of hers you want, my dear. Everything, if you care to."

Jean shook her head.

“That is all I want. I know so many people who need them. She would wish it, I know.” She walked back and forth, straightening and folding the different garments, while Farrance sat with his elbow on the little desk watching her. She stopped near him once.

“I wish I could help you,” she said, in a low voice. “I know you have dreadful thoughts. I wish you could think of her cheerfully and happily as I do. You know I never let myself imagine anything terrible. What I love to think is that God had a beautiful new body waiting for her, and that her soul wears it now. I imagine her smiling, well, lovely, in such a pure white dress. She seems so young to me when I think of her. The body she left is no more herself to me than this dress in my hand. It was the dress she wore on earth. She has another in heaven, one that is strong, that never suf-

fers. Oh, I do love to think of her so! I loved her so! No one was ever so good to me in all my life."

She bent her face into the folds of stuff which she held and kissed them again and again.

"Are you lonely, Jean?" asked Farrance, presently.

She looked swiftly up at him as she knelt over a parcel of clothes upon the floor. His eyes were grave, serious, very kind. Her own smarted suddenly.

"Yes—but people don't often think so," she answered.

"That is because you are so plucky."

"Perhaps; but I think it's more Venus than anything. I should die without Venus."

"And how long do you mean to lead this life?"

"Oh, for three or four years more. I must—I'll have to support myself when I get back to America."



SHE LOOKED SWIFTLY UP AT HIM AS SHE KNELT.—p. 168.

“And what will become of poor Tony?”

“But Mrs. Benson has kept him for you all this time. She loves him.”

“He loves you best of all.”

“Yes, I know; but babies outgrow love.”

Farrance walked slowly up and down the room. Suddenly he stopped before her.

“Are you less lonely when you are with me, Jean?”

The girl turned very white, then flushed, and her hands began to tremble. She tugged impatiently at the string which she was trying to knot, and broke it.

“Yes, yes; of course,” she said, answering him.

“That’s good!” he exclaimed, with a change of voice and manner. “We must be great friends. I am going away from here; from this house, I mean. I’ll have a room and atelier on the Rue Vaugirard. You’ll let Mrs. Benson bring you there sometimes, hein?”

“ Oh, yes ! You are very good.”

“ I think we shall be very fond of each other,” remarked Farrance, combing thoughtfully at his beard with his strong, dark fingers.

CHAPTER XV.

DURING the next month Jean and Farrance saw a good deal of each other, but had no more personal talks. He managed, with Mrs. Benson's aid, to keep her from being so much with Maman Cici. The poor woman was in a desperate state about her husband's faithlessness, and they said she had taken to absinthe drinking. Jean was her one comforter. She raved and wept to the girl hour after hour, warning her against the baseness of men, their perfidy, fickleness, lowness of aim and nature.

"Oh, yes, yes! I know," she would cry. "They all think I am drunk—that I am in a delirium. It is only you, Jean—it is only you who know how I suffer, who believe

in my torments. May God reward you, blessed child! May he save you from men. May he let you take me as a terrible warning. Oh, bless you! bless you! my good little one, for your kindness to me!" Jean did not think that Maman Cici drank now, but she felt sure that she took something—an opiate, perhaps. She told Farrance so one day.

"I have just been with her," she said. "It is awful. She says that she is in hell, that black mud closes over her, and that no one but me can help her. Last night she was even worse."

"Were you with her last night?" asked Farrance.

"No—well, yes—but only a part of it."

"You are very pale. These things are dreadful for you. Look! I have an idea. It is lovely weather; suppose we get the Bensons and Miss Ferguson and go to Fontainebleau for the day? Would you

like that? I can take my traps along and you can pose for me en pleine air."

In another hour the five were on their way to the Gare de Lyon, Benson, his wife, and Ellen Ferguson in one cab, Jean and Farrance in the other. It was the third week in April, the sky as blue as a child's eyes, the leaves of the horse-chestnuts making a green mist down either side of the Champs Elysées; over all a gauze of golden light, through all a warm scent of violets, freshly watered turf, asphalt, varnish, stuffs, the hides of horses, which twinkled in the gush of sunshine. The children swarmed like humming-birds under the cup of an enormous azure flower—standing on chairs to look at the gay Guignol puppets, racing after wooden hoops, whipping with red and yellow whips their many-colored tops. The spring bonnets bloomed in profusion. It was the season of yellow daffodils, mimosa, buttercups, primroses. One saw

them by the hundred. The great flat hats looked like enormous battledores on which lay the shuttlecock in shape of a knot of flowers. Back and forth among the vivid throng a man, sallow, ragged, wheeled himself in a kind of wooden trough. The fountains on the Rond-Point looked like aigrettes of jewels. Far away one saw the Arc de Triomphe, gray, delicate, like the gate of fairyland. Now they reached the Place de la Concorde. The white horses of the statues reared upward from the vapor of leaves. At the feet of Alsace-Lorraine lay mourning wreaths of immortelles and purple beadwork; garlands tied with crape; knots of living flowers, some faded since yesterday, some fresh from to-day. They lay there in the glinting sunshine among the powdery fragments of many other such offerings, while the sparrows pecked at them with their sharp, querulous beaks. The silver web of the fountains swayed and smoked in

the light wind. In the centre rose the great needle, pointing steadily upward as though saying: "Though it has all passed and you laugh and make merry, He has not forgotten what happened where I stand." It seemed to Jean that all at once a veil of crimson dropped between her eyes and the enchanting sight. These were the very streets that had run blood; this was the very spot, the very Paris, whose gray buildings had seen it all. Up that narrow street past the Louvre, past the gilded iron railing of the Tuileries, past her own home, she had come in that ghastly, jolting cart; she had said to herself: "This throat that I can now turn from side to side, this very throat on which so many kisses have been pressed, which has been filled with laughter, which has ached with weeping—in a little while, oh, how horrible! They will write tragedies about me! I shall be the heroine of romances!" She must have thought of her poor mother—of herself

when she was a child. Little broken words of her babyhood, treasured by her mother, must have come back to her. She must have told herself over and over again that it was a dream. She must have wondered how she would look afterward.

“How pale you are, child! And what dilated eyes!” said Farrance, suddenly. “Your day in the country hasn’t come too soon.”

“How I shall love it!” she exclaimed, pressing her hands hard together as they lay in her lap. He sat watching the clear oval of her cheek, which the blood had again clouded with an airy carmine. Her hair glittered in the sheer light under her hat of rough straw with its wreath of blackberry fruit and blossoms. Her white cotton gown was sprinkled with little leaves of a pale green. She looked as one might imagine a dryad of the Bois de Boulogne, who, one feels sure, would bind her chaplet of wild flowers about a

Paris bonnet and drape her foliage garment according to the last mode.

Suddenly they drove from the smooth wood onto the pavé. The streets became narrower, dingier, more crowded; the Seine gave forth a white-gray lustre between the plummy branches of the budding white poplars. For a long way the parapet was covered with drawers full of books from the curiosity shops opposite. People stood by them here and there reading. Sometimes it was a girl with a basket of bread or of fresh lettuce on her arm, her dress guarded by a long white apron, her arms thrust into full, white oversleeves, reaching above her elbows; sometimes a smartly dressed man, with his stick under his arm, his pearl-gray gloves smudging themselves on the covers of the old volume in his hands, his forgotten cigar going slowly out in one corner of his mouth; sometimes a gamin on tiptoe, searching for possible illustrations among the musty leaves.

They passed shops with the most unique titles: "Au bon Diable," "A la Brioche Renommée," "Aux Cent Mille Souliers." Women, with great trays of violets and white hyacinths, held up nosegays as they passed. In the booths, near Nôtre Dame, the sun fell upon masses of faded gorgeousness; priests' vestments of green, of scarlet, of orange, worked in gold and silver; rags, of cloth of gold set with bits of dulled glass representing precious stones, of torn lace, of old brocades stained with wine and time. Here and there, tankards of copper and brass, bits of old silver, rosaries, crucifixes. Behind, in the warm shadow, a girl, with the face of a malevolent gypsy, and a dark-red, laughing mouth, pressed her cheek against the Persian cat on her shoulder, showing teeth as white as its fur, and flashing the sun into its blinking beryl eyes from the little mirror of old Dutch silver in her hand.

"There's a subject for you!" said Far-

rance; "but what values, eh? We'd have to resurrect Van Ryn himself for that, wouldn't we?"

The streets got broader again, less crowded — they were nearing the Gare. At a stand on one side a man and woman were making toffy. A little circle of iron hooks were set into a wooden pole, and upon these they tossed lumps of the gluey stuff, red, blue, and white, pulling them into the desired brittleness, with quick movements on one hand, while keeping off the crowding children with the other. Farrance threw the latter some sous, and as the cab drove on they heard one of the urchins shout: "Enfin c'est un Tricolore de sucre. Vive la France! Vive le Tricolore de sucre!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THEY were fortunate enough to get a second-class compartment to themselves. The others were soon chattering and laughing over a basket of sandwiches, but Jean and Farrance preferred to sit opposite each other at the windows and look out at the greening country. The calm, fair landscape swept in long lines under the pale blue of the sky, which seemed very near. One saw objects outlined in a fringe against it, trees, sheep, wagons, the red-tiled walls and cottages. The poplars, trimmed to a tufted head, were putting out luxuriant shoots all up their slender boles, and Jean said that they had always reminded her of large green Dorkings standing on one ruffled leg. She hoped that the forest of Fontainebleau was not like that—she would be so disappointed.

Farrance replied that she must wait and judge for herself. He did not speak, except to answer her, and she grew silent after awhile, thinking him absorbed in searching a motif for his day's work.

Mrs. Benson as she shredded the fibres of meat from a chicken wing with her square teeth, was talking in a low voice to Ellen Ferguson, and Mr. Benson had retired behind a copy of the *Figaro*.

"Now you mark my words," his wife was saying, "it'll be exactly as I told you the very day of the funeral. He's going to marry her—sure. You watch him how he looks at her every now and then, when he thinks she ain't noticing. And she does the same thing, only not so often. She cares the most. She's nervous. He ain't. It'll be a good thing for her. She's as sweet a girl as I ever saw, and smart. My dear, that child is as keen as a brier. She'll be the making of him. You see now. It'll be a

splendid thing all round. I bet he asks her to-day. Yes, I do. I bet a pair of light-gray gloves with black stitching on the back."

"Well, I can't bet," said Ellen, with her usual cautious timidity, "because, you see, I wouldn't be surprised much if he did, only I don't feel sure one way or the other."

Mrs. Benson cackled good-naturedly.

"I d'clare, Ellen Ferguson, you do remind me more of a cat in walnut-shells than anything in the world. You lift up each idea and shake it carefully before using it, exactly like a cat in that fix does its feet. Well, I'll give you the gloves anyhow, if he does. Now sit sideways between him and me, because my nose shines and this is Bois-le-Roi, and I'm going to powder it—I mean my nose. He-he!" and she cackled again.

The same lovely weather they had left at Paris enveloped Fontainebleau. It was decided that they should drive to the heart of

the forest, spend the day there, and walk back in time for the eight o'clock train. Mrs. Benson, however, wished first to visit the château. So they passed through the iron gate and walked up the paved way toward the grand entrance, and then through the right archway of the castle to the carp pond. An old woman, under a sort of tent, sold them bits of stale bread, and the five leaned over the stone railing to feed the great lazy fish. One had a grotesquely large eye, the size of a thimble, and was ravenously greedy, shooting out his droll sucking lips at the morsels of bread, and lashing the water with his cream and scarlet body. Two young soldiers next to Jean were convulsed at his antics. "Ah! ah!" they would cry. "Ah! Voilà ce monsieur-la! Oh! quel monstre! Quel tableau! Oh! la-la!" Jean found herself watching them instead of the carp, and was startled when Farrance pushed her gently to one side and stepped in between.

“These boys are very rude sometimes. They might jostle you,” he remarked, by way of explanation.

“Oh!” said Jean; then added quickly: “yes, of course—thank you.”

There were only a few people waiting to go through the palace that day. Jean hung a little behind; the tapping of her high heels seemed a frivolous sound to penetrate that stillness as of dignified death.

She stood for some time before the bed on which Napoleon had slept, with its covering laid smoothly and its simple letter N in gilt at head and foot. A large mirror was let into the wall at its side. She had visions of the man raising himself on his elbow under that gorgeous coverlet and regarding his image in that glass, silently, with perhaps something of wonder—he and his shadow alone in the firelight from the huge chimney-place.

Farrance missed her suddenly, as the old



GAZING CURIOUSLY INTO THE LARGE MIRROR.—p. 185.

guide was explaining how the deep mark in the mahogany table, where the emperor signed his abdication, was made by the furious dashing down of his pen.

He looked around, expecting to see Jean's little teeth uncovered in a gay laugh of disbelief. She was not there and he turned back to see what had become of her. He found her on the bed of Napoleon, gazing curiously into the large mirror.

She flushed when she saw his reflection coming toward her in the glass, and slipping down went quickly forward to meet him. Farrance could not help laughing outright.

"You strange child!" he exclaimed. "Will you tell me what on earth you were thinking about?"

"Oh, about him, of course," she answered. "I was wondering what thoughts must have come to him, lying there in the firelight. How he must have looked into his own eyes and said: 'You are Napoleon,

Napoleon the Emperor of the French. You were once poor and unknown, and now you are emperor, emperor, emperor! But though you have the lives of all these Frenchmen there in that hand you hold up, you cannot make one dream come or go! No, not one! You rule all France, but your dreams are rulers over you. Presently your eyelids will close and sleep will come, and then dreams, horrid dreams, perhaps; memories of battle-fields, mangled bodies, screams of agony. You will dream of all the mothers you have made desolate, of all the blood that would not have been shed but for you, and not until you wake up again will you be emperor.' "

"How you feel things!" said Farrance. "Do you know, Jean, it is terrible to feel everything as you do. You tempt such awful suffering."

"But then happiness makes me happier than other people."

“ Perhaps so. To feel as you do is a gift, like painting or writing. Are gifted people ever very happy ? ”

“ Yes—only unhappiness generally comes last instead of first, and we always think the present is more intense than the past was.”

“ You mean ? ”

“ I mean that when you feel things intensely, terribly, almost, if you love first and then hate, although you may have loved just as much as you hate, you are apt to think your hate is the deepest.”

“ You have thought a great deal about love and hate, Jean ? ”

“ Everyone has who has thought at all, haven't they ? ”

“ I imagine you have more than most of us. I wish you would tell me some of your ideas about it all. Will you ? ”

“ I don't know. They aren't very clear, I should not know how to tell them.”

“ And you have an ideal ? ”

“What is the use,” asked the child sorrowfully, “when it is only the real that happens?”

“You have lived too much alone, Jean.”

“Yes. Very likely. But, after all, I have often thought that two people who loved themselves utterly must feel more lonely than the rest.”

“But why?”

“Because they must wish so desperately to be as one, and they never can be. It is not so hard to feel apart, when you feel indifferent; but to love, and still feel apart—as your hand belongs to you, serves you, is always near you, and yet is not you. No, you don’t understand and I can’t explain it to you.”

“My dear, I understand you very well,” said Farrance, soberly.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE forest was enchanting with its violet-gray mist, its moss-greened tree-stems, its tender spray of young spring leaves. Blades of grass here and there pierced through the carpet of reddish winter foliage. Once a deer, breast high in the dead ferns, paused to eye them, with lifted head and questioning nostrils. An old couple by the roadside was gathering wild violets. The woman, seated on a fallen tree, held open the skirt of her black gown, into which her white-haired companion placed handfuls of the little flowers.

“There’s your chance, Farrance!” shouted Benson. “Paint it half life-size and call it ‘Winter in the Lap of Spring!’”

Farrance laughed and said that he did not

like the notion of appropriating other people's ideas.

"But it would make a good picture; don't you think so?" asked Jean, shyly. "Watch them when they look at each other. It is so gentle and affectionate. She has crape on her dress and there's a deep band on his hat. I think they must have lost a little grandchild. And what lovely soft hair they both have. And how rosy her pretty old cheeks are. She is an image of a dear, fresh lady-apple."

"Would you really like to have a sketch of them?" asked Farrance.

"But how?" she said, puzzled.

"Cocher!" he called, in reply. The cab drew up sharply.

"I'm going to adopt your advice, Benson, after all," he explained, as the others stopped too. "I'm going to spend twenty minutes here and make a sketch for Jean. She's taken a fancy to this French Darby and Joan."

Mrs. Benson sent Ellen a swift glance

which said: "You won't get those gloves, my dear girl."

Benson, glad to get on his legs again, gave an enormous stretch and shake to his long body.

"Let's stop here for good," he suggested. "It's as nice as anywhere, I guess."

"Well, let us, then," assented his wife. They sent away the cabs, and went wandering off among the huge moss-covered stones which lay piled about on the hill-sides under the bossed, twisted oaks.

After a time Farrance chose a point to work from, and setting a short pipe between his teeth, put up his easel and poured some lavender-scented varnish over the wooden panel on which he was about to work, rubbing it in with a large bristle brush.

"You can superintend this performance if you like," he said to Jean, "but the rest of you must clear out. I'm too modest to work with ten eyes pinning me all at once."

“I don’t think you’re so awful modest!” exclaimed Mrs. Benson, tossing her heavy coils. “Who wants to stay near your smelly old paint things, when they can get this heavenly forest air? D’you s’pose we came all the way from Paris to watch you mess with horrid oil and varnish? Not much! Jean can stay if she likes. Ellen and Jack and I are going to the fountain or pond or whatever it is near here. The cocher said they had snakes in boxes, and a swing, and Louis Quinze’s head on a rock, and all sorts of lovely things. It’s right round the road here a little way. When you’re through you can come too. But I’m sure I like your calling yourself modest! Modest indeed! Ellen was telling me only this morning that someone told her last week ‘that Adrian Farrance is the most conceited fellow in Paris,’ and they said they hoped your picture for this Salon’d be as stuck up as you are yourself. He-he!”

Farrance laughed and began to indicate the position of his sketch with a pointed brush.

"It will have to be half guesswork," he said to Jean, as the others walked off. "Don't tell on me—and don't expect finished portraits of your old love-makers. They won't be much more than two spots of dark gray, light gray, and purple."

"You are too good to do it at all," returned Jean, who was delighted. He dashed away in silence for a time and she stood watching him, with a bunch of fresh brushes in her hand, through which he searched hurriedly now and then. After half an hour of this he turned around suddenly and said:

"You must be worn out standing there. Do go and sit on one of those rocks. I'll be done with it in a minute or two—or would you like to join the others?"

"No. I'd much rather watch you—if you don't mind."

“ I like it,” he answered ; “ but sit down. I feel that you are tired. Wait a minute—there’s a book in my pocket, if you’d like to read.”

“ Thank you. I’d rather just sit quietly. I can read in Paris. I love to watch the wind and sun through the leaves there, and I will get some of the wild violets for Mrs. Benson and Ellen.” She took off her hat and laid it on the rock beside her, letting the wind rush through her loosely knotted hair. The shadows fell upon her face in grayish rose color, with gold about the edges. Where her dress was cut away about her young throat gleamed a little band of milk-fair flesh.

“ I should like to make a study of you as you are now,” said Farrance, suddenly. The old people had wandered out of sight some moments ago.

“ Well, you can,” she told him. And he worked for another hour. At the end of this

time he came and sat down by her, looking at his work through his hollowed hand.

"I wonder what title Benson would suggest for that," he said after awhile. "I might call it 'The Girl with the Meeting Eyebrows,' like the shepherd's sweetheart in Theocritus. Or would you like 'Ænone of the Married Brows,' after Tennyson?"

"I've always thought it was so ugly to have one's brows meet like that," said Jean.

"The Greeks didn't," said Farrance.

"But then one ought to have a Greek nose to go with it."

"I don't know. I rather doubt whether the Greeks really had those noses they gave their statues. They are ugly, I grant you—at least to my idea. But you are like one of those idyls I spoke of just now. I can fancy you brewing the magic drink for a false lover, with your black Venus instead of Thestylis to help you. I can fancy you saying, 'Delphis troubled me, and against Delphis am I

burning this laurel, and lo ! even thus may the flesh of Delphis waste in the burning ! ’ ’

“ Why can you fancy me saying that ? I don’t believe that a great, real love is ever selfish and cruel like that. ”

“ Don’t you, my dear ? I fancy you are thinking of affection ; not love, the passion. A passion is always cruel ; to one’s self if not to others. ”

“ No, I don’t mean affection, ” said Jean. “ I mean the way that men and women love each other. ”

“ And what do you know about that ? ”

“ I know very little, but I feel a great deal. ”

“ And do you think one can love twice ? ”

“ I was thinking about that just now. There was a bee humming quite close to me over the violets, and it came to me that love stung once—then died as a bee does. No, I don’t think people love twice—not in the same way. ”

"But all the ways of loving are sweet, dear."

"I don't know. I haven't any way of knowing—perhaps I am all wrong."

"Look, dear, suppose a man told you that he loved you, would you stop to question whether it was his first or his twenty-first love?"

"It would depend upon whether I loved him."

"And if you loved him?"

"Then it would depend upon whether he loved me."

"Jean," said Farrance, suddenly, "I love you. Will you marry me?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN entire silence followed these words of Farrance. Jean felt the blood beat stinging into her face and then ebb suddenly. He was looking into her eyes, which rested on him, wide, startled, and had put one of his hands over hers, which were sunk among the violets in her lap. He felt that she shivered. At last she drew her eyes from his. Her face whitened and she parted her lips as though to answer him.

“Will you, dear?” he urged, in a whisper. Her answer made him start back, taking away his hand. It was a low but distinct “No,” firmly spoken. He stood looking down at her, pale also, after his swarthy fashion, his eyes indignant.

“No? And why? You doubt my word?”
he said, at last.

“I think you are mistaken.”

“And it isn’t possible, I suppose, that you may be mistaken?”

“Yes—but I do not think I am.”

“And you—do you love me?”

“I am very fond of you. I—I have great affection for you.”

“My dear girl, I am not asking for your affection.”

“Then you are not very generous,” said Jean, still in the quiet, low voice which she had at first employed; “because you have only affection to give me.”

Farrance moved impatiently away for a step or two, and then came back.

“You are mistaken. I love you, and with a love, too, that grows every day.”

It had, in fact, grown with a rapidity which startled him after that unequivocal “No” of hers. He found suddenly that her

consent was of more importance to him than he had imagined it could be, and that it was not only from philanthropic motives and to please his dead wife that he wished to marry the girl. She had a charm for him which seemed to increase in direct ratio to every moment of her present coldness.

“Do you believe me?” he asked, finding that she did not speak.

“I believe that you believe what you say.”

“Jean! I never knew that you were so obstinate.”

“I am not obstinate. I only see all this clearer than you do. You are fond of me, you see me leading a lonely, unprotected life—a dangerous one, probably. You know that—that she loved me. You don’t care for anything much. I amuse you. You don’t wish anything sad or harmful to happen to me. It is kind and good of you, but I—you see—no—you must listen, you must listen——” she broke off, growing suddenly

excited, as he turned away again with an impatient "Pshaw!"

"I will not marry a man who loves me in that way."

She, too, was on her feet now. The color glowed again on her face. Her eyes were dark and shone steadily as they rested upon his.

"I will not marry a man who cares for me as you do," she repeated. Farrance was excited too.

"How do you know in what way I love you?" he demanded. "Can you see into men's hearts? I have not pretended to feel for you what I once felt. You know very well that I am not such a hypocrite. That is gone—done with. I care for you in an utterly different way. It is absurd to compare the two feelings. But I care for you—I care for you intensely." He lifted her hands suddenly to his breast. "Jean, look at me; I want to see your eyes!"

‘I will look at you as much as you wish,’ she said calmly, though trembling a little; “but it is not love you feel for me. No man can feel twice what you have felt—and—and”—here the trembling became violent—“if I married you I should want to be loved as much as you loved—her.”

“As much in a different way—I can—I will, child. Look, I swear it to you! You have roused something new in me during the last twenty minutes. I am not cold about it as you think. I care desperately about your answer. I wouldn’t have believed this morning that I could care so much for anything on earth. My child—my little dear one, come close to me—you can rest so forever if you wish to——”

Suddenly she drew back from him, turned away with an anguished gesture.

“I can see her—I can see her now,” she cried in a heart-broken voice; “all white and cold and pitiful—lying there between us

in her coffin ! I can see you—I can see your eyes ! Oh, how you loved her ! How you loved her ! I thought that you would die too—and now you want to marry me ! You say that you will love me as much ! It seems too terrible ! ”

Farrance's face grew ghastly ; and then he controlled himself with an effort. He stood thinking for some moments.

“ Jean,” he said, suddenly, “ will you sit here again and let me talk to you a little while.”

She sat down beside him, her hands folded hard one over the other upon her knee, her lips pale and pressed together, her eyes on the dead leaves and spring grass at her feet.

“ What I want to say is this,” began Farrance ; “ you feel all this so differently from what I do, because you have religious beliefs which I have not. To you, Lilian lives somewhere in another world—another state.

To me she exists no more than she did to her mother before she was born. She is as completely gone from me as the breath I have just breathed, and the words we have been speaking. To me this life is all. It cannot, perhaps, be just what it was, but it still holds pleasant, even lovely, things. Love is still love, though it takes different forms, as I was myself when a child, and will be myself if I live to be an old man. It is not the first distraction of love I give you, but it is a strong feeling. I don't think you need be afraid to accept it, that is——" he broke off, and his hand was on hers again; "that is, if you love me, Jean."

Still she was silent, and presently he went on: "If you don't love me, my dear, just say so as bravely and quietly as you say other things; but I hope with all my heart that you won't keep to that 'No' of yours, darling. Here is another thing that may help you. She left me a letter saying that she

hoped I would marry again, and that it would be you. She loved you very much, Jean."

"It is that, it is that," panted the girl. "She loved me and I—and I——" There was a sort of horror in her face as she stared at him. "I can see her so plainly," she said again. "And you—I can see you kneeling there in the snow. Her voice comes back to me now. I can hear her say, 'Adrian' and 'Jean.' How can you believe that she isn't anywhere? I am afraid of you when you say things like that. You must feel that there is something beyond all this. Why, I have never felt that even birds and dogs die. I do not believe that a man—that anyone who doesn't love God can love another in the highest way——"

"My dear, we can love the attributes of God without imagining a supernatural being to whom they belong. I can love justice, mercy, truth, purity, love itself, although I don't believe in the Jehovah of the Israelites.

After all, if I don't believe, is it my fault? Belief is certainly a more comfortable state. To turn from orthodoxy to what one thinks is the bare truth is like turning from a great easy-chair to a stone bench. What a prosaic simile! Eh? And after all, dear, I feel very much like the talking pot in Omar:

“——Some there are who tell
Of One who threatens he will toss to hell
The luckless pots he marred in making. Pish!
He's a good fellow and 'twill all be well.”

“I never believed in a hell,” said the girl. “It is not that—it is only that such a love should pass, that you should want it to pass—that——”

A curious expression came over Farrance's face.

“I wonder whether you would think me crazy if I told you something?” he asked her.

“No—tell me!” she said, almost imploringly. She hungered for any possible light

which he might be able to throw on the confusion and doubts in her mind. "Tell me!" she repeated, in her earnestness unconsciously resting her fingers upon his. He lifted them gently to his lips, and then sat smoothing them absently for a moment or two.

"Well," he began finally. "I cannot even attempt to explain such a paradox, but the truth is, Jean, that I love her at the same time that I love you, and that though my reason tells me she has gone from me forever, she is as real a presence to me as the spring about me."

"It is strange," said the girl, lifting her lustrous eyes half solemnly to the blue air above; "but somehow I understand——"

"You do understand, Jean?" exclaimed Farrance. He drew her suddenly to his side.

"Yes," she said, still looking far away from him; "because—because—I love her

with all my heart—I would serve her in any way that I could, and yet——” She turned to him suddenly, her face changed, vivid, exquisite. She opened her arms with a childish, impulsive gesture of love, of abandonment.

“ Oh, I do love you ! ” she cried out to him. “ I thought I did not—but I do—I do ! ”

Farrance, touched and delighted, would have taken her into his arms, but again she drew back. She covered her face with her hands. He saw the oval nails whiten with their pressure against her forehead. She was utterly still. It seemed to him that the blowing of the fragile spring foliage about them made her quietness seem more complete. It was as if she had stopped breathing. He did not attempt to touch her or speak to her, subdued by the knowledge of her greater emotion ; aware that a larger nature had touched his, and that he had roused a feeling which he could neither

measure nor control. He asked himself whether it would be manly to accept a love so much more intense than any he could offer in return—to make such a child into a wife who had not her husband's whole heart? "And yet," he repeated to himself, "I love her far more than I thought I did." Life seemed to him a strange chaos of beginnings, of endings, of phrases written half in one language, half in another; of present, past, future mingled in a vast conglomeration; like a book badly bound, in which the last pages come first, and the end of which is an unfinished sentence.

Presently she turned to him; she let him see her face, which was pale, the lips quivering, the eyes without tears.

"You must not say any more to me now," she said, whispering. "I want to think a long, long time. There are so many things. I am so tired. I want so much to be by myself." Her voice broke piteously.

“ I will go away and leave you, dear,” said Farrance at once. “ You can call me when you wish me.”

He knelt down suddenly and put both arms about her as she sat crouched together on the rough stone.

“ You must try and feel my love as a rest. I would not have troubled you so for worlds, my dear, dear little girl ! ”

“ Thank you. You are so good and kind. But you’ll go away now ? ”

After about half an hour she called to him. Her face was still pale but quiet under its fine, level brows, and she had smoothed and retwisted her hair.

“ Let us go to look for the others, not wait for them to look for us,” she said, and gathering the painting gear together, they set off in the direction indicated by Mrs. Benson.

CHAPTER XIX.

Two weeks passed, during which Jean, shy and cold, avoided Farrance entirely. He, meantime, had become subject to that species of sudden, unexpected emotion which makes us in some dreams love even our enemies. His feeling for Jean advanced in a powerful wave, while hers seemed retreating with the quiet surety of the undertow. The hypnotism of the unattainable was upon him, and he viewed life, art, himself, the future, from an entirely new standpoint. When he contrasted his present frame of mind with the state of sapless indifference in which he had been for more than a year past, he was reminded of those shrivelled bunches of fibres called "Roses of Jericho," which spread and blossom when plunged into a bath of cold

water. The girl's pure and maiden nature refreshed, invigorated, enthralled him, with a species of enchantment he had never before imagined. He could only compare it to the sensation which he sometimes experienced when sitting, charcoal in hand, before a blank canvas, dreaming of its hidden possibilities.

The thought of her face as it had looked when she had held out her arms to him for that swift moment of self-revelation at Fontainebleau caused a keen curiosity as to what her love would prove under the test of daily companionship. She had for him that baffling interest which a Latin sentence in the midst of a page has for the man who reads only English. The meaning may or may not be profound. The desire to translate it is unconquerable. He was unconsciously more absorbed in what she might feel for him than in any possible emotion of his toward her, and could not draw satisfactory pictures of

her in this or that condition, since she never behaved under any circumstances as he had fancied beforehand that she would. As he sat smoking after breakfast in his atelier he began to fill the empty chairs with her imagined figure, to follow the sparkling curve of her head against the rich shadows, the gleam of her small feet in their varnished shoes which would twinkle like points of jet beneath the straight skirt of her simple gown. She might have posed, he thought, for Falguière's buoyant statue of "La Femme au Paon." There was the same airy line of hip and shoulder, the same small, proud bust, the same delicately modelled arms and careless, tossed-back head. He thought of her as Psyche, seated on the grass, and tugging to open the cruel box of Venus, with lips pressed inward like a child's and brows drawn into a pretty obstinacy. Painted in early June, with the opal fire of nude flesh in sunlight against young leaves, such a study, carefully

worked out, might bring to pass one, at least, of his many day-dreams.

She and the boy would be interesting too, as a motif. He, with his antique, gypsy air, she, with her pearl-tinted slenderness, as of a North American sea-nymph.

During a full hour, enveloped in a film of tobacco smoke, with hands clasped behind him, with eyes plunged into the further shadows, restless, dissatisfied, he walked back and forth from one end of the room to the other, turning these thoughts over in his mind, questioning himself, his talent, his prudence, the quality of his sentiment toward this young girl who absorbed so much of his time and conjecture. At last thrusting himself into another coat and taking up his hat, he went out into the warm afternoon air toward the Champs Elysées. As he passed a café near the Rond-Point he caught sight of Jean seated in a cab, the horse of which was clacking lamely down hill toward the

Place de la Concorde. He made a sign for the driver to stop. The rules of French etiquette are not applied to each other by American artists living en camarade on the left bank of the Seine, and the proprieties were as little consulted by Farrance on this occasion as they would have been in a provincial town in America. He found that she was not bound in any particular direction, only driving up and down among the gay throng for amusement, and remembering that there was a concert at the Cirque d'Été, suggested that they should go there together. She replied that she would like it very much, and he got into the cab beside her. She was cool, demure, non-committal, keeping her eyes from him, her slight figure drawn as compactly into her corner of the cab as a little shellfish into its shell. As they drove on, a shower streamed suddenly through the pale sunlight in what looked like strands of fine steel beads.

“Ah ! Le Diable marie sa fille,” said Farrance.

“At home, we say he is beating his wife,” returned Jean.

The cabman raised the hood and covered them up to their chins with the black oilcloth apron.

“Look at the women putting handkerchiefs over their hats,” went on Farrance. “How they do scamper ! What a whirlwind of color ! Those children are like runaway bits of a kaleidoscope, and how majestic are the nou-nous, with their streaming cap ribbons.”

“The man with the paper whirligigs seems to be the most worried of all,” said Jean. “Do call him. I want one !”

“You want a paper whirligig ?” exclaimed Farrance ; “for yourself ?”

“No—for Tony ! He loves them,” she replied quietly.

The man of the whirligigs was enthusias-

tic in his response to Farrance's signal, fairly running toward them, while a little girl of about eight, in a black frock, toddled after him, balancing a huge cotton umbrella as well as she could over the fragile toys. The whole mass revolved gayly, fluttering on their wires like the petals of some huge and bizarre flowers, while suspended from threads behind pirouetted gay little dolls made of card-board, with parti-colored tissue-paper petticoats.

Jean bought a whirligig and a doll, and Farrance gave a franc to the little girl. She said, "Merthi, Monsieur ! Merthi, Madame !" at the same time dragging her sombre skirts over the damp pavement in a deep courtesy. As they went on they saw the man stoop and kiss her.

"At least he's good to her," said Jean. "The poor little soul. Did you see that all her toes were out of her shoes?"

"But they were very plump, rosy little

toes," replied Farrance. "I hope that if I'm ever reduced to selling whirligigs, Tony will take to the life as kindly."

Jean laughed and blew upon her own whirligig, which spun round in a pink blur.

There were left only two of the worst seats, when they went to buy their tickets, and they found themselves placed close beside the stage on the right hand, unable to see anything except the three harps above them and the backs of the performers, one of whom was a young girl.

The air was filled with the rustle of women who settled themselves, and there was a sharp twinkle of the harps which were being tuned. As he sat there by Jean, in the warm, dimly-lighted room, with the memory of the gray rain outside to accentuate his present feeling of soothed contentment, he was amused to find that he already regarded her as a part of his life, and that to himself he criticised her gown, her hat, her

jacket, even her gloves, with that sense of responsible proprietorship which a man feels in his wife. A sudden doubt jarred him, and he straightened himself with a movement of dissent, as the first chords from the overture to Gluck's "Orpheus" vibrated through the hall.

After being steeped for some moments in this deluge of harmony they began to experience that subtle, music-born sense of mutual comprehension which, on occasions, can rouse the most practical. He looked at her, and this time her eyes met his. Her hand rested on the arm of the chair between them. He put his over it, and she trembled slightly.

"Do you love me?" he asked, in a low voice.

She whispered back: "You must not! You must not!" But she was astonished at that sudden waking of a long-quieted emotion, which is like the first movement of re-

turning life in one who has been in a cataleptic sleep.) She became conscious, as though for the first time, that she loved Farrance, that he was beside her, that he was free, that he wished to marry her.

They were now playing the third impromptu of Chopin. Her veins seemed beating with music rather than with blood. She was whirled on in a reckless series of thoughts, of moods, of conjectures.

The past had belonged to another, but it was over, done with, as forever gone from the vivid present as the one to whom it had belonged. A sort of intoxicated consciousness of triumphant life welled and mounted in her. She had fought, prayed, struggled, conquered. Yes, she had conquered her feeling for him—she had even thought it dead—and now it had come back again, as it were, refreshed by sleep, and he loved her, he wished to marry her. These feelings, over-excited and intensified by the wild mu-

sic, became so overpowering that she could bear them no longer, and started up as though to leave the hall. Farrance touched her arm and she sat down again, closing her eyes.

"It will be over in a minute," he said. "Only wait. I read your heart, Jean."

"I am glad. I want you to," she said, lifting her eyes with a certain courage. There was suddenly silence—then applause. They went out together into the deepening twilight. Farrance called a cab. "Au Bois," he said as he got in. Then he turned to Jean, who made a slight movement like that of a bird when one it loves is near, and he drew her into his arms, bent down his head and rested his lips upon hers in one of those long kisses which mean either ecstasy or the absent-mindedness which has learned to regard them as part of a routine.

The girl, alarmed, bewildered, yet conscious of a new and subtle sense of delight,

poignant as flame and sweeter than all her young wonderings about love, half yielded, half withdrew herself in his embrace, too confused to realize what was happening to her in this sudden step from affection to passion, her whole consciousness throbbing within the circle of a kiss.

Farrance, for his part, after the first pulse of male triumph and exultation, was teased by a cool, slow-trickling sense of disappointment, of flatness, which distilled itself drop by drop through his veins, and finally made the quiver of his lips upon the girl a forced imitation of kisses which he had bestowed years ago in another mood and upon another mouth. Between him and the little figure which he held in his arms crept another figure, like the ghost in Heine's song, and said to him: "Do you remember our first kiss, given on that afternoon in the woods outside the little town where we were acting? It was not like this." As the child's heart beat

higher and higher, his pulses quieted to a dull measure. He drew away his head with a sigh, and Jean hid her face in the folds of her cloak, shivering in the loosened clasp of his arms. It was a moment of crisis for both. Such kisses are always the seal of despair or happiness, faith or treachery, self-abandonment, or self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XX.

THE wedding day was fixed for the 1st of December, and during the six months that intervened Farrance was harassed by varying moods, which left him now in high spirits now in chasms of gloom, now coldly philosophical or possessed of a tender remorse which caused him to lavish upon Jean the most affectionate words and caresses; he never gave her another kiss, however, like that first one, and she was not sorry. It had frightened as much as enraptured her, and she loved better the quiet joy of leaning on his breast while he stroked her bright hair and told her of strange things that he had seen and read; while her ear was happily filled with the regular sound of his heart, against which it was pressed. It seemed to



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her that when a bird sings for the first time it must feel as her own heart felt now. She longed to embrace the whole world; kissed often the brown face of Venus, and even touched with her lips the petals of the hyacinths and primroses in her window, wishing that these lovely days could last forever.

But Farrance, driven finally to a sort of desperation by his conflicting moods, shortened their engagement two months, and they were married October 1st.

On his wedding-night he had a dream which seemed to him of several hours' duration. He thought that as he lay there listening to Jean's soft breathing, and holding one of her slight hands against his breast, Lilian came and stood beside the bed, resting her hand upon theirs. He could not move or look at her, but he knew that she was there, and a cold moisture broke out upon him. Presently she spoke and said: "Do you know that it is snowing to-night?" He tried

to answer, but could not move his lips any more than he could his eyes. "It is three inches deep where I have to lie," she continued. "Come and stay with me for a little while until I am warm. The child is asleep. She will not miss you." And then, somehow, he was upon his feet following her, still without being able to utter a word. And when they came to the graveyard the grave was open and the coffin, for he could see its white satin lining glistening in the wan light; and suddenly she fell on her knees beside the narrow opening, wringing her hands and crying: "Oh, I had forgotten! I had forgotten! There is not room for two. Go back! Go back! I have brought you out into the storm for nothing!" Then he saw her creep into the grave, and lie down in the coffin; and the falling snow soon hid her from his sight, while he stood there as in chains, powerless to stir hand or foot, or to cry out. He awoke

with a horrible start, and saw the walls of the little room glowing in the dim firelight, the outline of the curly head on the pillow beside him, the gleam of the wedding-ring on the hand which he still held.

After a moment or two he got up very quietly and ascended the little stairway which led from the next room into his atelier. The apartment had belonged to a photographer, and the roof and sides of this room were entirely enclosed in glass. Beyond stretched the chimney-pots and roofs of many houses which were covered with snow. One looked down into a marble-yard, where already some workmen were moving about in the gray light. Just outside, a bit of the roof not enclosed in glass held pots of dead flowers, and was surrounded by a rotten wooden railing covered with ivy. Grape-vines, trained upon poles, rattled in the keen wind of dawn. Unconscious of the bitter cold which pierced through the cloak

he had thrown about him, Farrance stood for a long while staring out at the eastern thread of fierce orange which widened and lengthened slowly, as though a worm of fire were eating its way through the zinc sheet of the sky. As he watched the breaking of the first day of that new life which he had chosen for himself, some lines of Heine's which he had not thought of since boyhood came suddenly back to him :

“ My sweetest love, when in the grave,
The dark grave, thou shalt hide thee,
Then surely I will come to thee,
And nestle in beside thee.

I kiss thee, clasp thee, crush thee wild,
So still and silent lying :
I call thee, trembling ; I softly weep
Till I myself seem dying.

The midnight speaks, the dead arise,
In mazes dancing lightly ;
We two alone are in our grave,
Your chill arms fold me tightly.

The dead arise ; the Day of Doom
Doth give them joy or sorrow ;
We two alone for nothing grieve,
Nor crave a happier morrow."

"Some men would shoot themselves, I suppose," he said, marking out the rhythm of the lines upon the frozen panes by which he stood. A little stumbling noise made him turn, and he saw Jean standing in the doorway at the head of the stairs ; her dressing-gown, of a bright happy blue, covering her ; on her cheeks that deep babyish pink which comes to some women with sleep ; her eyes smiling at him ; her pretty shape trembling a little, partly with cold, partly with shyness.

"Are you ill ? I was frightened," she said, stopping where she stood and trying to smooth out her rumpled hair over the curve of her small head. Her feet in their red, rosetted slippers looked like two dahlia flowers fallen at the hem of her skirt.

"My child, you will kill yourself," he ex-

claimed, going toward her. "What on earth made you come up here?"

"I thought you were ill," she said, still timid and confused; and then, as she saw the burning veil of the sky beyond the shrivelled plants and vines outside: "Oh, how lovely! How lovely! It is like fairy land up here."

"But you must not stand here, Jean, in these draughts," said Farrance. She turned to him suddenly with a little air of coquetry which pierced his heart; her head thrown back, her slight arms outstretched.

"Then take me up," she suggested. "I'm not heavy, and I can pull your cloak over my feet."

He lifted her up and she leaned with one arm about his neck, laughing a little nervously, and feeling suddenly that she weighed a great deal.

"I am heavy?" she asked in a little while.

"No! It's like holding a doll."

“ Ah ! That is because you are so strong. What arms you have ; they are like iron. And I never saw the top of your head before—not so well. You’re a little gray ! Did you know it ? But it’s lovely, the white in your black hair ! ” She stooped and touched it lightly with her lips.

“ Now I must carry you down,” said Farence.

“ What ! Down the stairs—this way ? But you might fall ! ”

“ The idea ! With an elf like you ? Why you’re not heavier than a handful of thistle-fluff ! ”

“ But down-stairs ! I feel as though I should drag you over. Now—now—oh ! mind the step ! Oh, be careful ! Oh, you don’t know how queer I feel ! Just like a child on Christmas morning ! ”

“ And I am Santa Claus carrying you off, I suppose, to put you in somebody’s stocking ? ”

“Then it would have to be one of Maman Cici’s,” cried Jean, with her pretty chuckling laugh.

“And now,” said Farrance, descending the last step, “here we are, and I am going to tuck you up in this big chair while I light the fire. Then you can make our first cup of coffee while I boil the eggs.”

“It’s like a picnic!” said Jean, bounding up and down where Farrance had placed her until the springs of the old chair rang together. “And how cosy it is! and how dear! Like the sweetest doll’s house! Oh, Adrian!” she exclaimed, breaking off suddenly and calling him by his name for the first time, “I am so happy! I am so happy!” She slipped from the chair and ran to him, kneeling down beside him as he stooped over the fire, and dragging his head against hers. “My dear, dear! You are so good to me! Do you know? A lovely thought has come to me. It is just as if someone

had whispered in my ear. You will be glad! Oh! I do thank God for sending me such a happy, happy thought! It is like the most beautiful wedding-present from heaven!"

"And what is it, dear child?"

"It is that she sees me and is glad with us—like an angel—she wishes us to be so happy."

She hid her face against his shoulder and clung to him while he knelt rigidly, the little bundle of fagots still in his hand. Presently he stooped and kissed her, and said, in a low voice, something that she did not catch. He went into the next room and stood quite still after he had closed the door, looking wildly about him for a moment or two; then drawing his hand over his face as though to smooth out its expression, which he felt must be ghastly, he went back to Jean.

She was busy with the new coffee-pot, and glanced up at him delighted as he entered.

"Venus can do all this to-morrow," she

said, "but I am so glad we are cooking our first breakfast. I'm famished—are you? Oh, but you look tired, Adrian! You look pale! What's the matter?"

"Nothing, sweetheart! What on earth could be the matter?"

"But why do you look so pale?"

"Don't you know that some people turn pale for joy?"

"Oh!" shyly; "is that it? And you are perfectly happy?"

"Why, Jean, what questions!"

"No, but you haven't been thinking that perhaps—that if—that——" She had grown pale too, and stood gazing at him, her brows troubled.

"My dear little one!" exclaimed Farrance, catching her in his arms almost roughly. But she freed herself and held him from her, searching his face.

"And you are perfectly, perfectly happy? You would not change anything? You

would not go back? You would not undo it? You would not have it different? You want me for your wife more than you want anything in the world—more than you want success in painting? You are happy? You are glad? Tell me! Tell me! Tell me in words! I have given you all, all! If I could only be near you I would never care to hear another strain of music for all eternity. You are my love—my life—my breath of life! Oh, see how I am speaking to you! That must show you how I adore you, how utterly I am yours!”

Farrance kissed her in a passion of remorse, which she took for the passion of love.

“I will make her happy—I will—I will!” he said in his heart. “I will fight this morbidness as though it were a devil and had a bodily presence. God help me!” He smiled a little bitterly when he realized this inadvertent prayer. “Anguish makes men

pray," he thought, "just as it makes dogs howl." He took Jean in his arms again and went and sat down in the great chair, keeping her upon his knee.

So the morning ended happily for her in spite of smoked coffee and four very hard-boiled eggs.

CHAPTER XXI.

It seemed to Farrance that to think with longing of the dead wife while you hold the living one in your arms is a pang to make men wonder why physical suffering was added to the throes of Job.

During these first weeks of marriage the mere iteration of the words "Mrs. Farrance," as applied to Jean, twisted his heart-strings. He shrank from it as religious men shrink from a blasphemy against the name of God. He read and re-read the letter which he had found in Lilian's desk, although he knew it by heart; craving the sight of the written words as one craves to hear the voice of the beloved utter the well-worn sentences which have become part of life itself. To see traced by her own hand that cry: "And oh! if it

could be little Jean !” brought him a certain consolation which no thought of his own could offer. “ I did what she wished, I did what she wished,” he said to himself a thousand times ; but memory seemed like the octagon room of Poe, closing upon him daily, inch by inch. The past became the real, the present the unreal. Jean seemed to him vague, elusive ; his marriage to her an undefined bond which led him to treat her as a daughter, a friend, a sister, rather than a wife. She was the magnifying glass through which Lilian’s features, both of face and character, became more and more distinct. Every movement of the poor child called up the contrasting movement which would have been Lilian’s ; every look of her eyes made him remember the different expression which Lilian’s would have worn at such a time ; every touch of her hand, every turn of her bright throat, every tone of voice and laughter, filled him with a terrible anguish of long-

ing, which would have been unendurable had it lasted without cessation. To place his lips against hers was like trying to slake great thirst upon some sweet, dry fruit, remembering the luscious growth of other lands.

She loved him with passion, but with passion of an intense spiritual order, which he could not comprehend. It differed from what he had felt for his dead wife as sunlight differs from heated metal. To him she appeared of a sweet, clear, chilly temperament, in which depth took the place of vehemence and sentiment of passion.

He was thus placed in the position of owing loyalty as a duty to one woman, while longing to bestow it as a free gift upon another; and as a result remained true to neither. His thoughts of Lilian were disturbed by the presence of Jean; his caresses of Jean chilled by the memory of Lilian. He told himself wretchedly that a man twice married is like a man who follows two arts.

In the depth of his own heart he knows that one is dearer, while he bids himself believe that he loves both equally, though in a different manner.

Jean, all this while, was entirely happy, with that buoyancy of a young bride who, overwhelmed by the realization of her own dreams, does not pause to examine profoundly her husband's state of mind. Farrance's present mood also made him even quieter and less talkative than usual, and Jean, for whom the novelty of the situation was sufficiently exhilarating, did not notice that absence of ardor in his caresses which might have made an older woman suspicious. To be near him, to belong to him, to hear herself called by his name, were facts of which she was never tired, and which shut out all sense of anything lacking.

After two weeks of honeymooning, however, she went again to her musical studies, and Farrance to his cours. As she played

the ceaseless scales, and arpeggios, and exercises for fingering, there came back to her memories of those happy weeks, of those fourteen exquisite days, which had each possessed its individual flavor of joy, as the honey of different flowers holds a varying charm for the bees that rifle them. She loved to recall the first night that he took her to the play. It was "Belle Maman," and the adventures of the young wife made her feel as though the play had been written expressly for her. Then, later, when one of Farrance's artist friends had come into the box, and he had spoken to her as "Madame," and she had started when Farrance touched her shoulder and explained to her that she was the "Madame" addressed. How droll it had been ! How gay ! How they had laughed ! And then for him to brush and plait her hair, instead of Venus ; and to fasten her gowns for her ; and to see his ties and sleeve-links lying about among the trifles on her little

dressing-table. How strange, how strange it all was and how sweet ! Her memory of Lilian became gradually as incomplete and shadowy as the impression left by an engraving on the sheet of tissue-paper which covers it. Farrance had told her of his wife's desire for their marriage, and she had learned to accept this simply ; to think with unconscious conventionality of Lilian as an angel, with a long white robe, white feather wings, bare feet, a little gold harp, and perhaps even a crown. For her the change from maidenhood to wifedom was so supreme, so entirely accomplished, that it absorbed other things and made them partake of its change with a certain fire-like quality. It seemed to her that her marriage must be in some subtle way different from other marriages, as her face was different from other faces—as, indeed, all faces, all leaves, all existences, no matter how much alike, differ totally in some radical point. There had not been for her

that sadness of the new-married maiden spoken of by the old poet. She had drifted on from river to bay, from bay to ocean, from ocean to mid-ocean, as calmly as a child who has fallen asleep in a boat. It was the very lack of love which made her husband's manner to her so calm, so undisturbing, so free from the friction which sometimes drives girls to think with longing of the old child life, and makes of the first year of marriage a torture-chamber for man and wife.

Their apartment on the Rue Delambre was complete, although very small, none of its rooms measuring more than twelve by thirteen feet. Of these there were three: a bed-chamber, a dining-room and a kind of antechamber from which the stairway led to Farrance's atelier, and in which Venus slept on a pallet, with Tony beside her.

It was all bright and gay with cheap chintz, picturesque bits of old furniture, and here and there a copper jug, a Moorish lantern, a

Persian gown. The pleasantest place in the house, however, was the studio, with its glare of light, scattered oil-tubes, painted cotton backgrounds, smell of turpentine, hot stove, fur and varnish.

It was always the order of the day with Tony to climb the little stairway and wander about among this sticky and greasy confusion, which he found delightful, a source of infinite amusement to the models and unnoticed by his absorbed father. He would be rescued perhaps an hour after his ascent, his frock a stiff armor of siccatif de Coutray, his face one radiant smear of Prussian blue, and his brown, strong fingers gummed together with silver white, vermilion, ultramarine, yellow and charcoal fixatif. He had grown into a handsome gypsy, and his mingling of French and English slang, pronounced after a peculiar method of his own, was undoubtedly unique. He adored Jean and had a romantic feeling for his father, which consisted partly

of a serious admiration, partly of terror, and partly of that strange, reserved pride which children often have in their parents and relations. The models called him "Tony Fleury," and he would sit contentedly for a long while on a high stool before an easel, pretending to draw with a bit of charcoal on a scrap of paper, and using stale bread recklessly, as he saw his father do. In the evening, just after she had returned from her music, Jean would romp with him in and out of the three tiny rooms, dancing about with her head on one side and her violin under her chin, while Venus clapped and Tony pounded about to the jigs and breakdowns, convinced that he was executing a marvellous performance.

CHAPTER XXII.

As there is one topmost leaf on every tree, there is one day or year or period in every human life which marks the culminating point of that existence. With Jean this period was included in the first two months of her marriage. She had never been really happy before, but she cast herself into the gay sea of the present with all the confidence of a hen-hatched duckling that swims by instinct. None of the forebodings which so often visit people in the possession of unusual joy disturbed her. That she should have love and prosperity seemed to her a wise, natural, and unextraordinary fact, which claimed her gratitude and best energies, but certainly not that doubtful awe with which it is generally received. As long as Farrance loved her,

no misfortune could touch her deeply, and she would have been quite as gay and joyous with their three rooms turned into one, with no Venus to help her with cooking and housework and the tending of Tony, with one gown to wear on week-days and Sundays, with a bit of cold meat twice a week and soup three times a day. She loved him with that fervor which sometimes craves self-sacrifice as a vent, for it was impossible that she could manifest in looks, words, caresses, the great wave of adoration which went beating back and forth through her veins all day.

One afternoon, when Farrance asked her to come up to his atelier for a moment, and then closed the door and stood before it, very pale, gazing at her, she knew with a great heart-surge that she hoped it was something, some disaster by which she could prove to him that he included in himself all that there was for her of joy and sorrow.

“What is it?” she asked, coming up to him; and as he did not answer, she slid both arms about his neck, and pressing close to him said: “If you love me, there’s nothing I mind—nothing, nothing, nothing!”

“You dear child!” exclaimed Farrance, kissing her almost eagerly. Then he put his arms about her and led her to the model stand, where they sat down together.

“You see, it’s about money — your money——” he began, when Jean interrupted.

“Oh! money!” she exclaimed. “Money! Mine? Why, I don’t care a rap—pas ça!” and she drew her little thumb-nail with a sharp click, from behind her pretty front teeth, as she had seen Maman Cici do.

“You’ve never known what it is to be without it,” said Farrance, who could not help smiling.

“No; that’s true,” she assented, pausing to look at him meditatively with her thumb

still in the air. "That's very true," she said again, sitting down by him. "Well, what must we do? Must we give up the apartment?"

"Ah, you see, we can't," answered Farrance. "The papers were all signed three months ago."

"We might sublet it," she suggested, after a second or two. "But tell me—what do you think about it? Is it all gone? Oh, well, if it has, what difference? I can give music lessons. My master said yesterday I could give lessons if I wanted to. Do you know, really, I should love it—to work all day just as you do, and feel that I was being a real help."

"Never!" said Farrance. "You shall never give lessons!"

"But why?"

"Oh, it's a dog's life. There, child—don't say anything like that again. It grates on my nerves——"

"We might as well talk it over, though,"

persisted Jean, slowly. "I've a sort of feeling—a sort of presentiment that it's got to come, and I don't see why you mind so, Adrian. I think it's what God meant—that men and women should help each other. I don't mind the money's going, but I do mind if you won't let me help you."

"Perhaps we can talk that over later," answered Farrance. "Now listen while I tell you all about it;" and he then explained, as well as possible, all the intricacies of the case, but the one fact that remained clear to her out of the technical jargon was that her \$10,000 now belonged to someone else, who had more or less right to it, although why, she could not comprehend.

"It was no one's fault," Farrance assured her. "As far as anyone could see at the time it was as well and securely placed as possible; but those things happen occasionally, and poor little Gill gets nipped along with Jack."

"I wish you could look into my heart and see how utterly I don't care about it," said Jean. Again he kissed her. "It's because I love you so," she whispered, while his lips were on hers.

That night, about one o'clock, he spoke to her, but in a whisper, so that he might not wake her should she chance to be asleep. She answered at once: "Yes, let's talk a little. I've been awake for so long."

"Poor little soul! And you wouldn't speak on my account, I suppose?"

"You were so worried. You see, I only mind it for you."

"But, child, with your quickness you must see that the loss of \$10,000 means a great difference in our way of living, our habits, everything."

"Yes, I know—it's foolish. Take me on your arm and I'll tell you just how I feel. It all seems as little to me in comparison to your love as that speck of light shining

on the handle of the bureau there does in comparison to the bureau. I have tried to care more on Tony's account, but when I realize that I love you and that you are here with me I cannot mind it. Perhaps it will come later when we get very uncomfortable——”

Farrance broke into a laugh.

“Don't laugh,” objected Jean. “It's horrid to be laughed at when you don't mean to be funny, and I know very well that I'm idiotic about it—only I've seen so many poor people, and the poorer they got the happier they seemed to be, somehow. Look at the Bensons; look at Ellen Ferguson. They were the poorest people in the pension, and lots the happiest. Besides, you know I believe that ‘everything works together for good to those that love God’—that love God, mind you. I don't say I believe that about everyone——”

“And about me?” suggested her husband.

“ Oh, you ! You love Him without knowing it. I think there are more who are Christians without knowing it than who go by the name.”

“ And what good do you think He will do by taking away your \$10,000 ? ”

“ It has done me good already,” answered Jean. “ It has shown me that I love you even more than I thought I did, and that I am not afraid of poverty. But tell me, what were you going to say to me when you spoke ? ”

“ Why, I had an idea for a picture, all of a sudden, and I thought if you would pose for me in the morning, from eight to twelve, that it might come to something.”

“ Ah ! Good ! Splendid ! But who are you going to paint me as ? I haven't any dress.” Then suddenly remembering : “ Oh, yes, I have ! the Parthenia dress—but I—I forgot,” she stopped, confused, her heart beating wildly over her mistake.

It is these bits of jetsam and flotsam from the past which, washed in upon the shore of the present, sadden for us its blue waters and clear sand, and make us think of the bones whitening under the sea and of the fair ships that have gone down.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE picture of Jean which Farrance wished to paint was quite simple. She stood in a gown of white serge on one side of a fireplace, the glow of which was reflected upon the heavy material from behind a Louis XV. screen of white and blue—a different white and a blue dull, faded, in harmony with the rich shadows and the russet of the girl's hair. She supported her violin beneath her chin, and the hand which held the bow was half lifted, as if uncertain of the music it was to bring forth. Her expression was one of expectancy, of hope, almost of radiance. The whole canvas was painted with the clear, candid color of an impressionist of the school of Manet, but in a lower key, as though one

looked through a pearl - gray atmosphere which subdued without muddying the brilliant tints.

Unfortunately, just as he was beginning to feel somewhat encouraged with its progress, Farrance was seized with a fever then going the rounds of Paris. It was the beginning of March, and his nervous calculations in regard to the time he would have between then and the 1st of May served to increase the fever day by day. Jean was in despair. To add to this complication, and as if to verify the saying that "troubles never come single," his savings of the past six years were reduced to half by a sudden fall of stocks. They were obliged to have fire only in the sick man's room, and for a week Jean, Venus, and Tony lived on potato soup. Unable to get scholars on such short notice, Jean had borrowed 100 francs from the Bensons to meet the immediate requirements of medicine and doctor's fees. The bills had already been

sent in twice, and a feeling of desperation had driven her out of doors with Venus one midday during the second week of March, having left Tony in the care of Mrs. Benson, whom he patronized with the grave assurance of childhood.

They walked along quickly through the clear windy air, the negro girl keeping close to her mistress's side and carrying the violin-case under one arm so that she might still thrust both hands into her beloved muff. From time to time Jean spoke to her in broken sentences: "I must—I must, Vee—I must get it! Where there's a will there's a way, you know."

"Lor'! Yease'm—sut'ny—I knows you gwine have luck, Miss Jean. Dee fire spit at me dis mawnin' an' I spit back at it good. Hit's a shore sign luck's comin'."

"I tell you what, Vee, let's pray hard for two blocks. Someone might ask me to play at a concert."

“ Oh, dat sut’ny is a spry idea, Miss Jean. I gwine pray hard.”

After walking for three blocks in silence Jean exclaimed, in a dry voice: “ Nothing! Nothing! Oh, dear God, please help me ! ”

It was an “ occasion ” day at the Bon Marché. As they passed along the narrow sidewalk the crowd hustled them off upon the cobble-stones. There were thousands of women, shabby and bedizened, each with one or more paper parcels in her arms. Even the children carried interesting-looking little packages done up in brown paper.

Venus broke the silence suddenly by saying, in a cheerful voice: “ I don’ care. I thanks dee Lawd I ain’ be’n bawn a hawse.”

“ But why? ” asked Jean, over her shoulder.

“ ’Caze I mought a be’n a cab hawse,” replied the negress, seriously.

Jean laughed aloud, in spite of her trouble and anxiety.

“Oh, what a comfort you are, Vee. What should I do without you!” she cried.

In a little while they came to the Pont de la Concorde. They crossed it and the Place de la Concorde, and Jean stood for awhile under the shelter of the obelisk looking back at the wonderful scene. It was bitter cold. The sky dropped in a great curtain of old pink, cooling to gray, through the centre of which quivered the sun disk, like a plaque of rose-gold fire. The buildings on the other side of the Seine were vague, ethereal, outlined in washes of violetish ash color against the dully glowing air beyond. The tritons and nymphs in the two bronze fountains were swathed in fold upon fold of green-white ice, from the gleaming wrinkles of which streamed delicate spray feathers. Above all soared the mist-blurred Eiffel tower, like the architecture of a dream. Near Jean one woman was wheeling a wagon of pomegranates and

another held a tray of violets and hyacinths suspended by straps from her shoulders. It suddenly occurred to Jean that she did not know where she was going. She turned abruptly and recrossed the Place, bending to meet the strong volume of wind which poured against her. An idea had come to her. "I can pawn Aunt Hetty's ring," she told herself, "and then as soon as Adrian is well he can dash off some pot-boilers, and I can get it back again." This was Jean's idea of the facilities offered by the art of painting. Just as the thought crossed her mind, however, she was attracted by some shadows reflected on the curtain of a window near which they were passing. It was within a short distance of her own home, and the sign above showed a sadly painted stag with enormous gilt horns protruding from its strange forehead. "Au bon Cerf Doré" was written underneath.

Someone was whistling a popular air,

while the others danced about, laughing furiously. There were both men's and women's voices. Venus, who was taller than Jean, stood on tiptoe and peeped through a torn place in the cretonne curtain.

"What is it! What are they doing?" asked her mistress.

"Dey jess projickin'," replied Venus.

"Do they look decent? Respectable?" pursued Jean, to whom another idea had presented itself.

"Yease'm, dey look right pleasine!"

"And do they keep on dancing?"

"Yease'm—dey sut'ny is bent on cuttin' shines!"

"Then come on, Vee, and be very quiet, and don't even smile. I'm going to play for them to dance, if they'll let me."

The girl who answered the bell of the concière was tall, red-faced, voluminous of bust and hair. Her stays seemed as though they would give way beneath her sturdy

pantings. She had evidently been one of the dancers.

“ Qu’est-ce que c’est ? ” she asked, fixing upon Jean her round blue eyes, which, although good-natured, pierced through the rough texture of her flesh like the points of embroidery punchers.

Jean answered calmly : “ You seem to have no music. I have my violin with me. I play many waltzes, polkas, mazurkas—I need some money.”

“ Oh ! money ! ” cried the girl. Then she called back over her shoulder : “ I say—you, Jacques ! Come here ! Here’s someone with a fiddle who wants to play waltzes for money ! Shall we have her ? Hein ? As it’s my fête, perhaps ? ”

“ What’s that you say ? ” demanded Jacques in the bubbling voice of a good-natured toper. He was strong and young, with a sunburnt face, a flat nose, a flat forehead, a flat mouth, and eyes which one saw

in a brown oblong between thick lids, as one sees a horse-chestnut between the sides of its half-opened burr. It was not a bad face, but animal, and rather dull. He exclaimed on seeing Jean: "Hi! There's a black one too, behind there."

"So there is! Perhaps they can really give us some fun! What do you say?"

"I say bring them along, by all means!"

The others were now crowding about the door. "Yes! Yes! Bring them along!" cried everyone.

Jean found herself in a small, stuffy room, overpoweringly heated by a stove of cast iron, and ornamented by enlarged photographs touched up with crayon. All the furniture, which seemed dingy and for the most part broken, had been pushed to one side. In the middle of the room, covered with an oil-cloth, stood a large bowl of hot stuff, which sent up a steam, drenching the room with the smell of rum. There were four

girls and three men, and a large woman of about forty, who sucked her grog through a straw, and occupied the only arm-chair in the room. Her face, larger and redder than the girl's whose fête was being celebrated, had still the same contours, and her bluer eyes were also like points of metal. She regarded Jean solemnly for several minutes, still pulling away at her straw, and then, pushing it from between her lips with her tongue, wiped her large mouth on the back of one hand, which she drew in turn across her apron, and then demanded loudly: "So you can play? Well—play then!"

"But what?" asked Jean.

"Why, Christie! Some jolly tune, to be sure! Does the black girl play nothing? Not even a triangle? Well!"

Venus has taken the violin from its case and was unwinding the silk handkerchief.

"Whoo! How black she is!" exclaimed

one of the young fellows, coming nearer.
 "She's so black she's blue!"

The others laughed at this sally.

"No sense, ijits!" observed Venus, glowering at them. She placed herself beside Jean in the attitude of defiance as the other began to play.

After half an hour one of the girls exclaimed:

"Say, won't you have something to drink? What fun it would be to get Blackie tipsy! Hein?"

"Good! good!" shouted the others.
 "Here, Blackie, here's a glass for you!"

"I don' wan' none uh yo' p'izen," replied Venus, shoving away the offered glass with her elbow.

"Have a bock, then?" suggested one of the men. "Would you like a bock, m'am-selle?"

"Lemme 'lone!" retorted the girl, who understood enough to grasp the gist of this

remark. "I'll bock you ef you go on wid yo' imper'ence."

"Sh! sh!" said Jean, warningly. The room was so hot that her forehead was damp with perspiration. It seemed to her that there were at least twenty people about her. She longed to have it over, but the others seemed bent on dancing. The more she played the more excited they seemed to grow—the fire ever increasing as the grog in the big bowl diminished. She had been playing for almost two hours, when the girl who had opened the door came toward her with five francs held out, exclaiming:

"There! You're finely paid—hein? And here's five sous for Blanchette!" Everyone roared at this, while one of the men came forward and, pinching the arm of Venus, shouted:

"I say! What if I claim a kiss from the snowflake! It ought to be a splendid one! Her mouth is like a pincushion?"

"I prefer the little fiddler," cried out an-

other. "Look here, Suzette—you wouldn't kiss me just now! Here's a prettier mouth, parbleu!"

He flung his arm suddenly about Jean, and bent toward her, when crash went the violin upon his head, and Venus stood glaring about her with the broken instrument in her hand, her thick lips puffing in and out with fury, her small teeth set, her eyes red. The man who had been hit started back with a growl and the others closed in a ring about him. From a cut under his hair the blood was beginning to trickle.

Jean saw all this with a flash, and her own cry was still sounding in her ears, when she found herself out in the twilight with Venus, hurrying along, the broken violin in her arms and the five-franc piece still in her hands.

"Run—run," Venus was urging. "Dey'll be arter us! Oh, cyarn' you run some, honey?"

So they went running until they came to the gardens of the Luxembourg.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONCE in the gardens Jean sat down on a bench, and, laying the broken violin across her knees, pressed both hands against her face, while Venus, sobbing with rage and excitement, knelt beside her, pouring out, to the best of her ability, comfort, advice, affection, sympathy. After awhile Jean put out one of her hands, which Venus seized, covered with ravenous kisses, and carried to her breast.

“We kin git hit mended,” she kept on repeating, but Jean shook her head. The violin was completely ruined, and she would have felt ashamed to confess the frenzy of grief which this roused in her. She could not have believed that one could love an inanimate thing so passionately. “I sup-

pose," she thought, "it is the same feeling that men have for their country and their homes, or women for the bed where someone they cared for has died, or their dead children's shoes." Tears began to roll through her fingers and drip upon the shattered violin. She felt utterly desolate and hopeless. Paris had never seemed to her at once so crowded and so lonely. It was with a start that she saw someone approaching her as if to speak. "Venus!" she exclaimed, rousing the girl, who had finally hidden her face against her knee. But the man coming toward them had nothing in face or manner suggestive of impertinence. He spoke at once.

"I am a painter," he said. "You look in trouble. Would you care to pose for me? I can pay you well. You can bring the black girl with you."

"Pose for you?" said Jean, and then pausing, blushed slightly.

"Just as you sit now, with that broken violin on your knees. I wanted just such a subject for an open-air study," continued the stranger, quietly. "You can pose in my atelier until it is warmer, as I like to make some careful drawings and compositions before really setting to work." He paused, and then, looking at her with a kind frown of conjecture, said: "You're a Southerner, ain't you?"

"Yes. A Virginian," answered Jean; "and you?"

She gazed up at him anxiously, her lips apart, and suddenly he smiled.

"Then we must be some sort of cousins, at least," he told her. "I am from Richmond myself. I have only been here a year. My name is Nelson. I dare say yours is Page, or Cabell, or Carter——"

"It is! it is!" cried the girl, delighted.

"What! All three?"

"No—the last." She gave a great sigh of

relief and let her slight body sink back, relaxed, against the hard back of the bench. "Thank Heaven!" she said. "It is all right! I can pose for you. I will, I do need the money—what time would you like me to come?"

"Oh, any time after twelve. I am at Colarossi's in the morning. Shall we say one?"

"One, then," repeated Jean, getting suddenly to her feet. "I can't thank you—I haven't any words."

"It's I who should thank you," returned Nelson, courteous if banal. He lifted his hat as she turned to go, and then suddenly walked after her. "I rather think you'd better take my address," he suggested in his dry voice, which was somehow so very kind, holding out to her his card. Flushing and laughing she took it from him.

"You made me too happy—I forgot everything."

“Well, don’t forget your appointment at one to-morrow. Good-night!”

“Good-night! Good-night!” said the girl, her voice shaking a little. As he stood watching them it seemed to him that at last they began to run onward into the closing shadows.

It was frightfully cold; bonfires had been lighted here and there on the sidewalks and around them swarmed the wretches of the streets, holding out their shrivelled fingers to the saffron glare of light and heat.

“How wretched that child must have been,” thought Nelson. “She was sitting there as quietly as though it had been an afternoon in May. But what an impression—if I can only keep it fresh.” So he walked on, going over his little adventure in imagination, pondering the size of the canvas which he would use, wondering whether the middle of March would be too soon to begin painting out of doors.

Jean, for her part, was radiant with joy and the victory of faith.

“Ah!” she stammered happily, as she and Venus ran on together; “I tell you, there’s nothing like praying, Vee, nothing. God always answers in one way or another. You must always remember that, Vee. You hear? Now, let me see—I don’t really want the money for a month, and I’ll have a lot in that time. Say he gives me five francs an afternoon—that’s what real models get—that’ll be 138—no—148 francs. That’ll pay the chemists and another month will pay the Bensons, and another—oh Vee! I’m so happy!” She decided, however, not to tell Farrance until it was all over. It might annoy him and he might raise objections which she could not contest; besides, it would be silly and wrong to disturb him at such a time. The least worry increased his fever, and to him the entire confidence roused in her by the fact of Nelson’s being a Virginian

might seem inadequate. "He would tease and make jokes about F. F. V.'s," she reflected; "and he would never let me go—but with Venus, of course, it's all right."

So every afternoon, instead of going to her music-lesson she posed for Nelson. Her master, on hearing of the accident, had at once lent her another violin, so that there was no possibility of any complication arising on that score. She played for Tony to dance every evening as she had always done, and Farrance, as a convalescent, lay on the sofa in the small dining-room and laughed at the boy's pretty antics.

By the middle of February he was hard at work again, and in April the picture was finished.

"I'll have a try at the Champ-de-Mars," he told Jean. "Parker and Ravillard tell me it's going to be something stunning. Dark-red cloth on the wall and spaces between each picture. Besides, a lot of the

tip-top men seem to be going there : Dagnan, Gervex, Courtois, Sargent, Puvis-de-Chavannes, and Carolus. Varnishing day will be something to see there, Jean. You must get a new frock. Here's 100 I got for that study of a marsh. Make yourself as smart as the smartest. You're to bring me luck, you know. Something young and fair with a ribbon at the waist. Say blue and white—but I leave it to you—only let your hat be large and don't brush your hair too smooth."

On the morning of the varnishing day Jean appeared, round, white, slender as a willow twig stripped of its bark. Her gown of thin white crêpon had a deep loose collar of turquoise blue. Her soft white hat held a wreath of crushed roses. Over her shoulder she twirled a sunshade of white silk, from the rough wooden handle of which broke a little knot of pear-blossoms.

"Maman Cici gave it to me," she explained. "She is so wretched, poor old

woman. I know you don't like her, Adrian, but she has the best heart, and it is a darling parasol, isn't it now, dear?" She was delighted with the admiration in her husband's eyes, delighted with her pretty sunshade, delighted to feel herself charmingly dressed, and to know that wherever she might appear everyone would be sure to exclaim: "Ah! you might know she came from Paris by her gown and hat!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THEY paused near the doorway of the first salon, enchanted with the view into the great airy room beyond, through which floated a light, blond and delicate, and upon whose sober walls the paintings glowed like varied blossoms, some vivid, rich, bizarre as orchids, some frailly lovely as pale wild flowers, some richly splendid as hyacinth clusters or the gold patens of heartsease.

Carolus had three of his best portraits ; there were some ravishing Dagnans ; Courtois and Gervex were certainly at their best.

They walked slowly, admiring, disagreeing, criticising, wondering. The rooms were not in the least crowded. All was fresh, cool, delicious. The women were like bouquets in their new spring gowns and bon-

nets. A novel gown of pale gray attracted them—its capuchin hood was full of Parma violets. The woman who wore it, tall and of a distinguished thinness, had reddish hair and long brown eyes, which suggested to Farrance new methods of “brushing.” She was standing against a study of yellow chrysanthemums, her profile cutting sharply the bright mass. All the time impressions of this sort were forming and dissolving before them.

“Well,” said Farrance at last, “my picture isn’t in this room; are you tired, Jean, or shall we try the next?”

Jean was not at all tired; in fact, she was prettier than ever, with her color a little higher, and one of her ears a soft pink under the loose threads of her hair.

“It looks as though one of your rose-leaves had got caught in your curls,” said Farrance, teasing her; and she pinched the other to make them both alike.

As they entered the next room a large painting by one of the "big men" absorbed them for ten to fifteen minutes, and then, as they turned about, an exclamation broke from them both at the same time. Opposite them, and on the line, hung a painting about four by six feet. An out-door effect, full of charm and atmosphere, and of that lovely austerity of early spring when the leaves, just opened, flutter like transparent butterflies upon the network of twigs, without concealing them. On a bench a girl was sitting; her hand had fallen at her side, a broken violin across her knees. In her eyes there was a look of despair and sorrow; the piteous lips were parted. It might have been a dead baby that she was holding upon her lap.

"Jean!" said Farrance.

She turned to him half frightened.

"That is you! You posed for that picture!" he exclaimed.

“Yes, I know,” she answered, hurriedly ;
“come away where it is quieter and I’ll tell
you all about it.”

When she had explained things at some
length, he said: “You always had more
pluck than any child I ever imagined, but you
were quite right not to tell me—I should
never have let you do it.”

“But you are not angry, Adrian.”

“No, child ; no, of course not — why
should I be? You did it for me—I’m not
quite such a flat.”

“But you look so worried, Adrian.”

“Yes ; that’s because my study of you
hasn’t turned up yet. It’ll probably be as
hard to discover with the naked eye as a
skylark.”

His laugh hurt her, and the day seemed
suddenly dreary and stupid. The people
pushed against her. The pictures were un-
interesting. They passed into one of the
smaller rooms, then into another. On the

right wall of the third, and in an execrable light, hung Farrance's picture undeniably "skyed." One of his friends happened to be looking at it as they came up. "I say," he exclaimed, brusquely, "it's an awful shame, old boy—there's a lot of good stuff in this. We've held quite an indignation meeting this morning, and I heard X—— himself say he didn't see how it had got so badly hung."

"Oh, this is an off year with me," returned Farrance, rather coldly. "Nelson, a Virginia friend of my wife, has done a much better likeness of her in his 'Broken Violin.' There were a lot of people around it as we came through the room."

"Yes, I know. The swells have made quite a fuss over it. Ravillard says he thinks Nelson will make his reputation in a stroke. A Virginian, did you say? I'll go and tell Wilmer, he's a Lynchburger, you know, and he'll probably burst with pride."

Farrance and Jean remained where he had

left them. Her throat ached sharply with the effort to repress her tears.

"I—feel—as—though—I had done it," she said at last in a whisper.

"My dear girl, that is morbid. You didn't make Nelson paint better than I, you know."

"He does not paint better than you," returned Jean, trembling. "No one can think it—it's all favoritism. They must see that yours is better."

"But it isn't, dear."

"Don't say so, Adrian, don't—oh, I am so wretched! I feel as though my heart were breaking! It is my fault! It is! It is! I have done you a dreadful wrong, and it was all for your sake I did it—and now it has turned out so horribly!"

"Jean, darling," said her husband, in his gentlest voice, "you've always been the most sensible as well as the pluckiest girl I ever knew, and what you are saying is the

most arrant nonsense. Forgive me, dearie, if I hurt you, but I really can't have you talking such utter rubbish, and making yourself miserable over nothing—because it is nothing. What is one Salon more or less? You and I know very well that I mean to succeed, if not this year, then next; if not then, why, the year after; but as for your having done me any wrong, it's really too absurd."

The kinder were his voice and manner the more miserable Jean became. She tried to seem consoled by these strong and affectionate words, and arranged her pretty lips in a smile that was anything but gay. Farrance, after awhile, grew too absorbed in his own disappointment to notice her expression, and they strolled back and forth in a kind of absent-minded silence, surrounded by a happy clatter of voices, looking with unseeing eyes at the pictures.

"I am tired," said Jean, suddenly, unable

to bear it any longer. "I think if you'll put me in an omnibus, Adrian, I'll go home."

"Why, yes, dear," he answered, with a readiness that was somehow like a rough hand on her heart. "You won't mind if I lunch here with Ravillard? He has something to talk over with me."

Jean found Tony making book-houses in the dining-room with Venus in open-mouthed sleep on the floor, her head supported on a copy of Doré's Bible. The room was full of that dreary midday light which seems the concentration of everything prosaic and material in town life. The tapping of the chisels sounded irritatingly from the marble yard below, and in the street two hand-organs were making odious discord, one rattling out a staccato air from "*Orphée aux Enfers*," and the other wheezing solemnly "*The Watch on the Rhine*."

"Moi playin' sogers," observed Tony in his original mixture of French and English.

“Moi go to make bonfi'es—sogers have so colt.”

“Yes, darling,” said Jean, from the table.
“splendid!”

She had taken off her pretty new hat, and was sitting with her head in both hands, gazing at the red-and-white table-cloth.

“Mus' hev kin'lin',” said Tony, presently.
“Du papier, Jeanie, tu plaît?”

“Oh, look for it yourself, dear,” replied Jean, vaguely. “Look in the basket!”

“Pas là—pas là—doo tout, Jeanie!” he called aggrievedly, in another minute.

“Well, you mustn't bother Jeanie now, pet. Look for some! Look everywhere! That's the way the real soldiers do.”

This had a decided effect on Tony, who was busy trotting about for some time. Then he settled down serenely to his play again, and Jean was only roused ten minutes later by a sharp sound of tearing paper.

“Oh, naughty Tony!” she exclaimed, starting up. “You mustn’t tear books. C’est très méchant, ça.”

“Pas méchant,” retorted Tony, swelling with the injustice of this remark. “Pas a truly book. Moi trouvé soo l’tapis.”

Jean took the book and the sheets which he had torn out from his unwilling hands; but he was too dignified to cry, and merely turned his back squarely upon her, swelling ever more and more, until he looked absurdly like the frog in the fable.

Jean found that she did not recognize the book. It was bound in black morocco, and had a nickel-plated lock in which was a little key. Then she looked down at the crumpled pages in her hand, and saw that they were in Farrance’s handwriting.

“It must be some sort of a diary. But why does he lock it?” she thought, puzzled. “He lets me open all his letters. I hope it isn’t very important. Let me see what

Tony has torn out." So she smoothed the pages and began to glance over them to see if they ran in order or if the child had got them mixed.

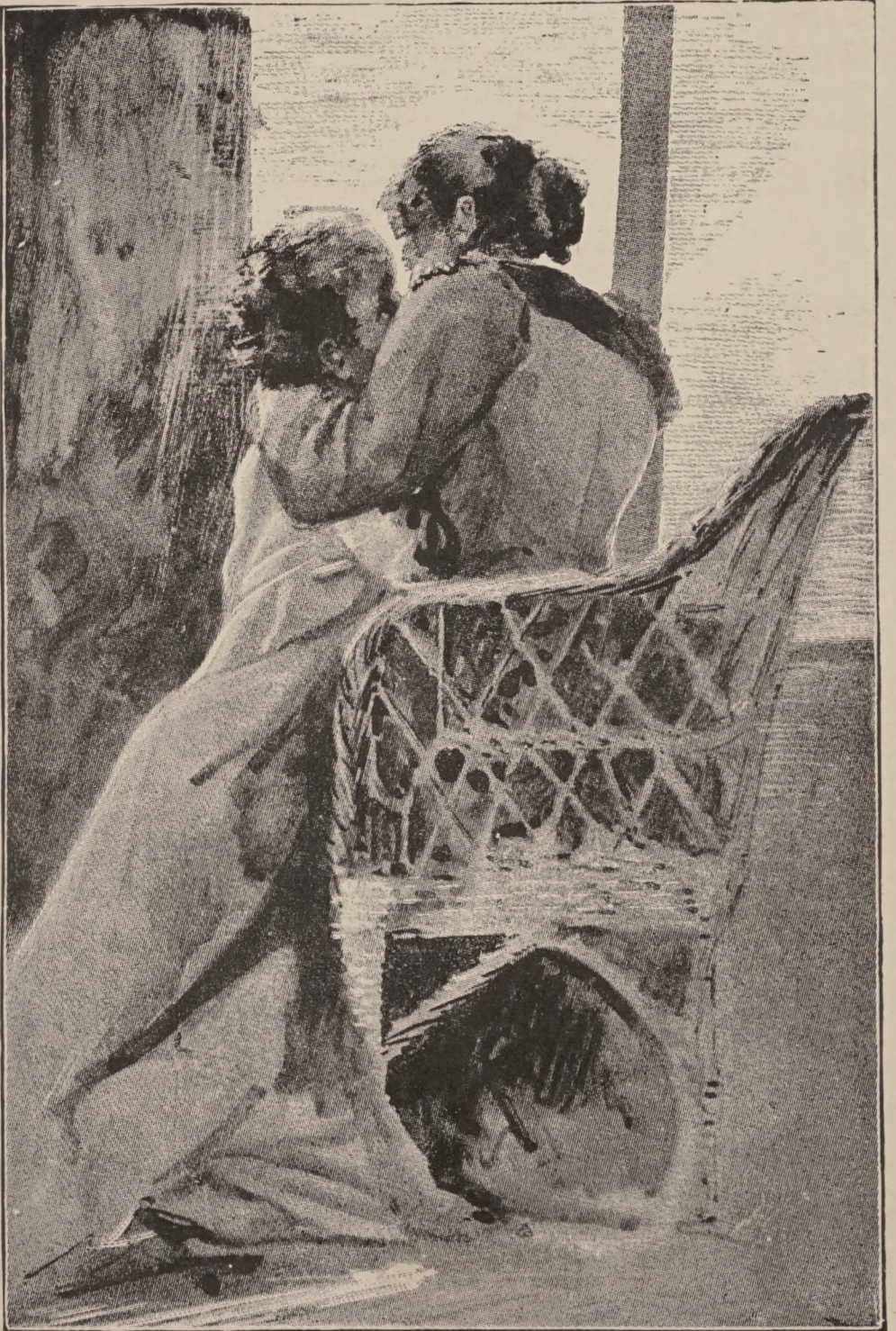
CHAPTER XXVI.

THE first sentence that caught her eye ran as follows: “——this hideous feeling of disloyalty to dead and living. My whole life is one long hypocrisy——”

She remembered afterward that the words seemed written in red ink—a streak as of blood across the gray page. All at once she stood to her full height, stretching out her hand as if for help. Her throat was very dry. Then she said aloud, speaking very slowly: “He—mustn’t—know.”

She took the torn pages in her hand and went over to Tony, kneeling down beside him and putting her arm about his angry shoulders.

“Jeanie is so sorry, Tony, dear. You can have the paper. It isn’t a truly book.



“MOI PEUR,” SAID TONY.—p. 289.

Suppose you tear it up. It'll kindle better. And then you might shut the book again and make a door with it. It's got a truly lock."

She pressed the book together and the spring snapped into place, then dropped the key behind the cupboard and watched the child, who, entirely good-humored again, began to tear the pages she had given him into small bits.

Suddenly she caught him to her, and hiding her face against the sturdy curve of his little body, sobbed violently for a few seconds, but without shedding tears.

"Moi peur," said Tony, startled, pushing at her with both fists; and she looked up and smiled and answered:

"But why, darling? Jeanie isn't vexed."

Reassured, he returned to his delightful task of tearing. With each short, crisp sound Jean felt as though a bit of her heart were being added to the pile of ragged scraps on

the carpet, but she sat there until the last sheet had been destroyed.

“He’ll see the scraps and think Tony did it, and then lost the key, got frightened, and shut the book,” she thought. She saw that she had forgotten to take off her gloves, and began to unbutton them and pull them carefully from her hands by each finger-tip. “I’m glad Venus is asleep,” she said to herself while she was doing this.

It occurred to her, after her gloves were carefully folded and placed beside her hat on the table, that she would like to pray ; so she went into the tiny bedroom and shut and locked the door. She did not kneel beside the bed, but took Tony’s little green wooden chair and went over to the window, where a pattern of spring sky appeared between the chimney-pots. Gazing up into this calm blue, she tried to say “Our Father,” but found herself repeating : “My whole life is one long hypocrisy.”

Her memory seemed suddenly paralyzed, and she could not recall with her utmost effort what came after "Hallowed be Thy name."

"I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do!" she said aloud. "I can't pray!" But she knelt on for perhaps half an hour, feeling a sort of consolation as of obedience in the mere fact of her physical position.

"I don't feel rebellious or hard," she murmured after awhile; "that is something!"

Then again: "It's very dreadful! I don't want to go to heaven! I want to stop being myself and go to sleep forever!"

After another pause she heard her voice saying as though from a distance: "Nothing can make it right! It was never anything! He has pretended!"

For a second time she sprang to her feet as though under a sudden blow or knife-

thrust and stood staring wildly about her at each nook and corner of the little room.

“He has pretended it all! He has pretended—pretended,” she repeated, her teeth chattering. “He has pretended to kiss me—to love me—he has pretended to be my husband! It has all been a sham—a sham! It has all been one long hypocrisy!”

Next another cry, still more terrible, broke from her: “Lilian! Lilian! Help me! I did not mean to do wrong!”

Although her breast heaved up and down as if she had run up all six flights of stairs, it seemed to her that she would never be able to draw a full breath again.

“I am dying,” thought the poor child. “No one could bear it! It is killing me! Oh, thank God!” and she stood and waited for the unconsciousness of death to put her out of her anguish; but instead of this her breathing got gradually calmer and her thoughts more collected.

"I will go out," she said, finally. "I will go out into the air and walk."

She could not remember afterward where she went or whether she had walked all the time, but at twilight she found herself on the Pont d'Jena, leaning over the parapet and gazing into the swirl of heavy water below. A girl was leaning there, too—a creature with sodden, reckless eyes and beautiful dark-red hair hanging loose. From time to time she muttered something to herself. There was a mark as though from a whip across one of her brown cheeks.

"She must have been pretty once," thought Jean, gazing at her. "She looks unhappy."

After awhile she touched the other's arm softly and said: "I am unhappy too—I wish I could help you."

The girl started and lifted her handsome upper lip as though to snarl, then paused suddenly and said: "Tu m'embêtes, tu

sais?" but did not seem really provoked. Jean's white little face was too unutterably wretched to rouse anger even in this girl of the people, and after a moment she muttered gruffly without turning her head, and while making a stabbing movement with her thumb downward over the parapet: "Are you in for that too, hein!"

"I—I—did think of it," answered Jean, faltering, "but not now. Are you?"

"Yes! You've got it," replied the other, curtly.

"And you don't care about le bon Dieu?"

"Why do you say 'the good God?'" asked the girl, with a laugh. "D'you think He's really good, that God up there? He is all-powerful and He—He has made a world like this; and you find Him good? That's very droll, that idea. That's always made me laugh ever since I was a tiny, tiny thing!"

"I would be good if I kept you from

drowning yourself, but you wouldn't thank me," said Jean.

"No, truly," replied the other; and then, after a pause: "Do you know what I am waiting for? I'm going to count ten boats, and then it'll be dark and I'll jump over. A good idea, isn't it?"

"Horrible!" murmured Jean.

They waited some time. Out of the green-gray twilight, over the gray-green water, another boat came gliding toward them, with its jewel-like lights of emerald and ruby.

"The third," said the girl folding in another finger on her hand which lay on the parapet.

"Why did you tell me?" asked Jean, presently. "Don't you know I could call a gendarme and stop you?"

"Yes—but you won't."

"And why?"

"You know too well what it is to want to

kill yourself. You're a kind heart. One must tell sometimes—besides, I feel that you will say a prayer for me."

"To a God you don't think is good?"

"Oh! ça m'est égal! He's a God all the same! He likes to be prayed to! He's a great one for flattery, that God of yours!"

"You mustn't! You mustn't!" said Jean, trembling. "It's too terrible!"

"As you like," replied the other with a shrug. There was again silence. Jean broke it.

"You have been very, very unhappy." she said, falteringly.

"Yes!"

"But there is someone who—who really loves you?"

"My lover loved me, but my brother killed him. I was an honest girl save for Pierre. And you?"

"I love mine and he does not love me. That is worse."

“ Yes—it’s all bad. But then you’re honest.”

“ How do you know ? ” said Jean.

“ One sees it in your eyes. You’re only a baby. But how can you say ‘ le bon Dieu ’ when it’s like that with you ? ”

“ Because I feel it’s all right, though it doesn’t seem to be. Sometimes I’ve thought it’s something like this: suppose you had two pet birds that you loved very much, and one hurt itself and had to be hurt still more before it could be cured. How cruel they would both think you, And yet you would be doing it for the best.”

“ C’est vrai ! ” admitted the girl ; but added, after a moment, “ if you were all-powerful, though, you wouldn’t let your birds get hurt in the first place, would you ? ”

“ But if suffering makes them better ? ”

“ Ah ! one is always good enough in one’s own opinion to deserve luck.”

“ But look—it hurts a baby terribly to cut

its teeth, and yet how much better it is to eat almonds and pomegranates and oranges than milk."

The girl grimaced, showing her own fierce little teeth.

"Not many of the people I know get those things to eat, whether they have teeth or not," she remarked.

"I put it badly," replied Jean. "I should have said that good strong meat is better than milk."

"Eh, Jésus! What is this 'good strong meat' of yours? Is it when your brother thumps you from the door with a broken chair leg, and your mother curses you from the bed where you've nursed her for twelve years? Ha! ha! Tu est bien drôle, minette, avec ton 'bon Dieu' et ta 'bonne viande!'"

"Does no one love you, then?" said Jean, presently.

"Not a cat! There's the fourth! Six to come yet."

“Suppose someone loved you? Would you care then?”

“But that’s absurd,” rejoined the other, indifferently.

“No, no,” said Jean. “I will! I will indeed! It’s chilly here! Come with me—I will give you a good, warm dinner. Look! Here is money! I made it myself! There is plenty! Come where it is warm and bright! Will you let me kiss you?”

The girl stared at her for a moment, half tenderly, and then murmured: “Elle est folle, la pauvrete.”

“No!” exclaimed Jean, eagerly. “No, I am not! I will give you this! I will take you to a safe place for the night! Come away from the river! Come! It tempts me, too! Oh, it does! it does! Let us help each other. Let us be good to each other. I will be your friend.”

“The fifth,” whispered the girl, absently. She looked curiously down at the hand which

Jean had taken and was holding in both her own. "But, really, you are crazy!" she repeated, finally; then added, in a brusque tone: "Et le bébé? Qu'est-ce-que tu va faire du bébé? Tu va nous aimer, tous les deux!" She began again her harsh laugh, but Jean pressed her hand over the brutally pretty mouth.

"Don't, don't!" she whispered, "it's terrible! I tell you I know how you suffer! But it's worse—worse what you are going to do!"

"The mud at the bottom there doesn't suffer."

"You are not mud! When you sleep, you dream. One suffers in dreams. To dream awful things forever—that would be worse."

"That would be hell," said the other, slowly. "What ideas you do have. Here's another. The sixth, isn't it?"

"Yes, that would be worse, worse, worse," went on Jean. "I have thought of it all the

afternoon. I was thinking of it when I spoke to you at first—of finishing it all, I mean. But then—unless one gives up one's life for someone else—perhaps then——” she paused.

“Ah, bah! On a cold night one is better in bed than out. One is snug in one's grave.”

“You will not have a grave.”

“What do you want? It's my way of talking.”

“But you would wish to be good?”

“Oh, that! I don't know, I'm sure.”

Jean struck her hands together on the stone parapet with a gesture of agony.

“Oh, God, God!” she said in English. “Do you hear? And won't you let me save her?”

The girl was drumming with the fingers of one hand against her cheek as it rested on her palm.

“Isn't it queer,” she asked, with a curious, dull dreaminess, “to think that in a

half hour, perhaps, I'll be down there? But it's the morgue above all that seems dreadful to me. I tell you frankly that gives me the creeps."

"Look," said Jean, circling her with her slight arm, "come with me only for to-night. Sleep warm, just for to-night. The river is always here. It is so much to me." Her voice trembled. "Ma sœur," she whispered, and pressed her lips to the other's temple. The girl put up her hand wonderingly, as though Jean had struck her rather than kissed her.

"Mais comme tu est bizarre!" she exclaimed at length. "Are you really—do you really—but I don't understand. Are you really troubled because, because——" She stood staring, her lips parted, her hard gray eyes on Jean's. "V'là!" she exclaimed, finally. "Il me reste toute ma vie pour me tuer, et tu a été bien bonne pour moi, ma p'tite follette. Allons!"

She drew Jean's arm through hers and they turned away together.

"Wine will taste nice, and some of your good meat, hein? I haven't stuck my teeth through anything harder than a gaufre since yesterday." She looked over her shoulder at another boat which suddenly emerged from the thickening web of gloom.

"The seventh!" she said, mockingly. "It's the magic number. Au revoir, little fly. You haven't stung me this time. Till to-morrow, and thanks!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

IT was still bright when Jean and the girl entered the café near the Gare de Montparnasse. They sat down at a little table apart, and a waiter came to take their orders.

“Now, what shall we have, hein?” said the girl, grinning. “I should like to order all on the carte—me!”

“Order all that you wish,” returned Jean, eagerly. “And would you—would you like some champagne?”

“Would I not—eh? You just try me! We’ll drink to good old death together. I’ve always heard that folks died better on a full stomach. I saw a man guillotined once. Ugh, but wasn’t it exciting! My poor Pierre took me. How plucky he was, that man!

He had murdered two little children. We girls sang to the Boulanger tune :

“ ‘ C’est Marreau
Qu’il nous faut ! ’

And the boys shouted :

“ ‘ C’est ta tête qu’il nous faut.
O ! O ! O ! O ! O ! O ! ’

How they did yell ; and Pierre had a splendid voice. My poor Pierrot ! Ah, my dog of a brother ! But what did I begin to say ? Oh, yes—about Marreau. They said he ate enough for four men an hour before his head was chopped off. And wasn’t he plucky, though ? Hadn’t he grit ? Let’s drink to his health, too—eh ? ”

“ No—no,” said Jean, deathly pale. “ You make me ill.”

“ Ah, well ! What shall we talk of ? Gilt prayer-books and sugar-plum angels ? I say ! I’m a funny sister for you to have picked up, p’tite ! ”

“It isn’t your fault,” murmured Jean, making a shadow over her face with her joined finger-tips.

“No, that’s true. Nothing’s a virtue or a fault of our own. It’s the way we’re born. I might have been you, and you me, you know, and your lover my Pierre—ha, ha! Well, it’s a droll life. And to think of my drinking champagne after all these years!”

The garçon here came up with a frothing bottle of that wine in his hand.

“A full glass, mind, and a drop for the table,” cried the girl, and laughed boisterously as the champagne foamed over on the soiled cloth. Then she gulped it greedily down her throat, making a delightful chuckling the while. “Ha! I tell you that’s the stuff,” she announced, gayly. “It stings as sweetly as a lover’s kiss. Look here; do you know you’re a first-rate baby?”

Jean said nothing. The girl horrified her more every instant, but she kept saying to

herself: "We are all women—all sisters—the good and the bad. I must save her—I must—I must!"

And then she began to wonder where Farrance was and what he would say if he saw her now—and whether he would care. And all at once something seemed bursting in her throat and she felt all through soul and body a surge of conviction: "Oh, he does care! he does care! He must! I love him so!" But the next moment those words began to beat their hard measure upon her mental ear: "My life is one long hypocrisy."

"Say! Don't you take any?" called the girl, leaning toward her with the tilted champagne bottle in her hand.

"No—no, thanks," said Jean, timidly; "that is, if you don't mind."

"Mind! I should say not! I'm up to two of these bottles!"

After a little while, however, she settled

down to her dinner, and Jean heard her crunching and purring over the chicken bones like a hungry and comfortable cat. She could not tell how it was, but a deadly drowsiness seemed settling over her. Just outside she could see a street-lamp which had been lighted a moment ago and which was flaring about in the wind that penetrated the cracked glass of its shade. She fixed her eyes upon it until her lids refused to stay open and a soundless darkness enveloped her.

When the girl had finished her hearty meal and emptied the bottle of champagne she leaned back in her chair with a great sigh of pleased repletion, and fixed her eyes on Jean. The child's fair head had fallen back against a column near which their table was placed—her bonnet of black velvet was crushed behind it. Her face looked a strange, glittering white in the electric glare. In her lap her hands, half uncurled, rested palm upward in a touching pose of



HER FAIR HEAD HAD FALLEN BACK AGAINST A COLUMN.—p. 308.

weary abandonment. The little face, so pit-eous, so lovely, stirred some chord of good in the girl's brutal nature.

"I'd stake my life she's a good little doll," she said, under her breath. "If she is crazy, it's a good kind of craziness. I say——" she broke off suddenly with a hang-dog glance about, "I'm blessed if I shouldn't like to give her a kiss before I go." There was no one else in the café. The waiter was busy with his dishes behind a screen at the other end of the room. She rose, and tipping awkwardly to Jean's side, just touched with her coarse lips the pure forehead. Jean stirred, murmured something in her sleep. When she had roused fully the girl was gone, and on her plate lay heaped the bones which she had stripped clean with her sharp teeth.

Jean's first impulse was to rush after her, but she stopped at the door, realizing the utter hopelessness of such a search.

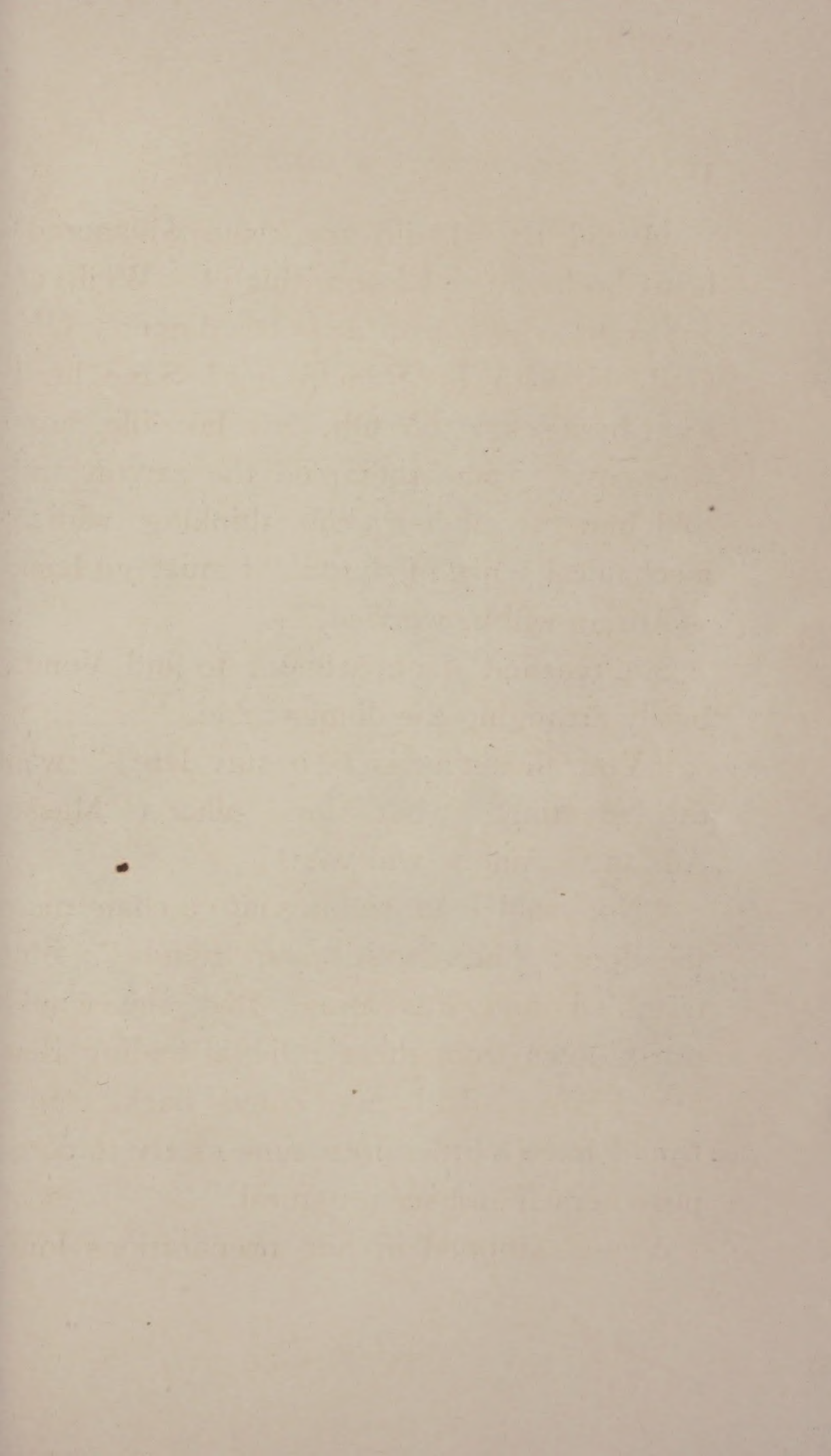
"I did try—I did try," she whispered, heart-brokenly. "Poor thing! Well, at any rate, she's had a good dinner. Oh, God! be with her! Help her! Save her! for Christ's sake! Oh, this horrible, horrible city!" She then paid the garçon and told him to call her a cab, thinking, with a mechanical sense of duty: "I must go back—Adrian will be worried."

She reached the apartment to find Venus busily arranging the dinner-table.

"You all sut'ny is be'n stay late!" was the greeting; "but, lor'! whar's Masse Adr'an? Ain' he wid you?"

"No," said Jean, sinking into a chair near the door; "he's with some friends." She trembled and was afraid that she would break down from sheer relief at finding that her husband had not come back. She would have a little more time to try to compose herself and seem natural.

Venus stopped in her preparations long





SHE LAY THERE FOR HALF AN HOUR WITHOUT SPEAKING.—p. 311.

enough to take off her mistress' boots, bring her her dressing-gown, and make her comfortable upon the sofa. She lay there half an hour without speaking, then roused to say: "Who knocked at the door just now, Venus?"

"'Twas a man wid a letter," answered the girl, and handed her a brief note from Farrance.

"DEAREST JEAN: I'm so sorry, but Ravillard and Wilmer tormented me to go to Meudon for dinner. I had to go or seem sulky. I know you'll understand. Don't you dare bother your dear little head over my unlucky picture.

"Lovingly, A."

Jean noticed things in this note which she would never have thought of noticing before.

"He would have said 'my darling' to—to her," she reflected; "and he would have written out his whole name."

Aloud she said: "Yes, Vee! It's all right; go on and have dinner. Mr. Farrance is not coming home. But I don't want any, I'm too tired—and don't bother me about it," as she saw the other approaching with protest in her face.

"Well, ef you's sick to-night 'tain' my fault," observed Venus, self-righteously.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FARRANCE did not come home until about twelve o'clock, and thinking Jean asleep, lay down very quietly beside her, afraid even to kiss her lest she should wake.

In an agony she thought: "He does not kiss me because he knows I won't mind if I'm asleep. It's only when I'm awake that he has to act. Oh, my own God! Let me die—let me die!"

She buried her face in the pillow, clutching it with teeth and hands, hearing the blood foam in her head, sickened by the heavy beating of her heart. The night seemed like an endless chain whose links were hideous dreams, each one more awful than the last—some fantastic, grotesque; others sombre, blood-curdling. Now she was in a catalepsy

and Farrance thought her dead, and stood over her and smiled at Venus and said: "Her hair'll make a lot of just the sort of paint-brushes I want. Cut it off quite even, will you?" Then he was altering her clothes for Lilian, who had somehow come to life again, sitting at the machine himself and singing: "Rat-tat-ton. Pit-a-pat-a-pon."

Then she thought that she was standing again by the river, and that she jumped in and was drowned. And at the bottom she found the French girl sitting with her lover among a crowd of skeletons who were making paper roses. She remembered wondering why these flowers did not melt in the water, and she was so tired that she wanted to sit down by the girl, who pushed her away, crying: "Go off by yourself! It's bad enough here without mixing up with people whose lovers don't love 'em." She woke with a gasping cry, horrified, trembling; but Farrance slept calmly on, and she lay there

counting his regular, long-drawn breaths until daybreak.

When it was six she got up, and slipping on her dressing-gown, went into the next room. She did not want anything particularly, and sat looking vaguely about her. Her one idea was to get away from her husband. She made his life a horrible sham—a long hypocrisy. She must keep out of his way as much as possible. Then she caught sight of the big Bible of which Venus had made a pillow yesterday. She sat staring curiously at it a little while, and then went and sat down on the floor beside it, and began slowly to turn over its leaves.

“How crooked and ugly he had made Adam and Eve!” was her first thought. “I believe I could draw better than that!”

She went on and on. The livid skies and weird landscapes fascinated her. They were like pictured continuations of her own bad dreams. Presently she came to the New

Testament. A great longing welled up in her breast.

“O Jesus! send me some word, let me find some word,” she said, brokenly, covering her face with one hand and leaning the other on the open book. She seemed to be touching a friend in those great, smooth pages, and knelt so for a little while, feeling soothed and comforted. Then she turned a page or two and her eyes fell on the words: “For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him.”

Half thrilled, half frightened, faintly comforted for a heart-beat she closed the book and got to her feet.

“I will try to bear it,” she said aloud, and then, terrified by the sound of her own voice, stood still and began to tremble.

Re-entering the bedroom on tiptoe, she got her clothes and dressed hurriedly. As she fastened her bodice with nervous fingers, one of the trite but sound sayings of her Aunt

Hetty came back to her: "When you're unhappy, honey, just you go and try to make somebody else ez happy ez you ken."

"Poor Maman Cici," thought the girl, with a gush of hot tears that did not fall, "I haven't seen her for ten days. I'll go there now. She wakes early too." So she was soon knocking at Maman Cici's door.

Folded in the same gray-and-purple dressing-gown, the woman sat over her little stove with a cup of black coffee smoking at her elbow.

"Ah! Ma chérie! Is it you? Surely Heaven sent you. But I have passed a night. It was terrible! Such dreams!"

"And I too," said Jean.

"You too, my poor darling. But what have you to dream bad dreams of?" She took the girl's cold little hand and patted it affectionately.

Jean stood quiet for a moment or two, and

then falling on her knees beside the woman, cast both arms about her huge body.

“Oh, Maman Cici! Oh, Maman Cici! My heart is broken! I am wretched, wretched!”

“Oh! là-là!” cried Maman Cici, with her invariable ejaculation for all occasions, whether grave or gay. “What’s the matter, ma belle?”

“You must not ask; I cannot tell you. Have you ever wanted to kill yourself, Maman Cici?”

“But often,” replied the other, fervently. “If I had not had one good, true, unfailing little friend—and not you either, mon ange”—with a dry laugh, “pouf!—I’d have had my brains spoiling my pretty carpet here long ago.”

“But you are my friend, and good and true, and that doesn’t keep me from wanting to kill myself,” said Jean, with dreary candor.

“Ah! child! Why play with you? I

won't! Look here—this is what has kept me from the madhouse!" She whipped out a little glass cylinder, encased in nickel plating, and laid it in Jean's hand. "Do you know what that is—eh, jewel?"

Jean regarded it with curiosity, moving it about on her palm with the forefinger of her other hand.

"Well, of course you swear never to tell?"

"No, never!" assented the girl.

"It's a needle for morphine!" whispered Maman Cici, her face one pucker of malicious delight. "With that one need never suffer from the heartache, and if one takes too much some day by accident, tant mieux. I tell you, petite, I have never, never loved my Auguste as I love that little darling you've got there in your hand."

"But it gives one horrible dreams, doesn't it?" said Jean, awestruck; "and—and it's wrong, isn't it—like drinking?"

"Ça m'est profondément égal," announced

Maman Cici placidly, taking it with fondling movements between her own fat fingers. "The whole of life's wrong, as far as I can make out, and I don't harm anyone but myself, that's sure."

Jean sat gazing into the fire for some minutes. "So you're happy, then?" she asked after a while, as Maman Cici sipped her coffee, rolling the little needle about in the hollow of her lap by trotting her round knees, as though it had been a baby and she were soothing it to sleep.

"Yes—always, more or less."

"And you take how much at a time?"

"Ten drops now—it used to be four at first; then five, and so on. It gets more and more all the time—and, oh! the heavenly dreams I have of Auguste."

She turned on Jean her dull eyes, which looked like bits of blue glass that one had just breathed on, and in which the pupils were two mere specks of jet.

“Look here, little one,” she said, suddenly, “perhaps I oughtn’t, but just for once—it couldn’t do you any harm—why don’t you take—say three drops?”

Jean started back.

“No! Never!” she cried, horrified. It seemed to her the most cowardly thing on earth. She was as profoundly sorry for the good-hearted old wretch as ever, but this was far worse than the drinking had been, and her last atom of respect was gone. “Never! Never! Never!” she repeated with energy; and then, to appease her, as she saw an angry look gathering in the dim eyes: “Perhaps some day, when I am in great pain, but not now; I have a great deal to do to-day. It might make me sick the first time.”

“C’est vrai! C’est vrai!” murmured the other, pacified. “And now you are going to read to me a little, chérie? I’ve a new book here—a love! Look!” and she tossed

a yellow volume to Jean, chuckling fatly. The girl turned a page or two and saw that it was a romance in which Ninon de l'Enclos figured as the heroine.

"Ah! What a woman!" sighed Maman Cici. "She could have made that rascal Auguste walk a chalk-line for all her age; eh, beauty?"

Jean read on like a machine for half an hour, sickened, revolted; then, in a moment could not bear it any longer, and started to her feet, exclaiming: "I must go! It is late. Dear me! I had quite forgotten."

But Maman Cici stopped her.

"Here! Look, child! You haven't told me a thing about this misery of yours. What is it, now? I'm like the very grave for secrets; and you know how I can sympathize if it's an affair of the heart. Dis donc, petite, is it that? Say, is it that scamp of a widower?"

Jean, her face ghastly, broke from her.

“Hush! hush!” she said, lifting her hands to her ears; “it’s not at all as you think—not at all; and I must go—now, at once!”

She rushed out into the fresh morning air, her whole being in a whirl of angry disgust. “He is right,” she thought, as she hurried along. “She is terrible, that poor old woman. O my God! my God! Where can I go? Whom can I turn to?”

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON her way home she bought a large nosegay of daffodils and a little basket of strawberries. She must have some excuse for her early walk, and a vague sense of comfort floated up to her with the familiar scent of fruit and flowers.

Farrance was dressed and reading the *Temps* when she entered. His manner was particularly bright and cheerful, as he had determined to keep her from brooding over the failure of his portrait. She, on the other side, smiled gayly, and offered her cheek for his kisses, though her feet contracted in her little shoes with the effort. She made a pretty game of guessing with him, putting the strawberries and daffodils behind her, and telling him to choose which hand she

should offer to him. All this time he was regarding her intently under the cover of their nonsense. Her pallor and the purplish streaks under her eyes startled him.

“Look here, dearie,” he said, suddenly, “you need some diversion. Suppose we go to see ‘Le Mariage de Barillon’ this evening? They say it is very amusing.”

“Well,” assented Jean, at a loss for any reasonable excuse.

Farrance came and took her into his arms with a quick movement. She shuddered convulsively and her head fell forward against his breast.

“Jean! What’s the matter?” he cried. “Are you ill? Do speak to me, child. You terrify me.”

“Nothing — nothing,” she said, at last. “It’s my head, I think. I have such a roaring in my ears.”

“Ah, then, perhaps it’s only the spring weather,” he suggested, much relieved.

"Here, I'll make you a glass of lemonade without any sugar before you take your breakfast. There's nothing better."

"Yes, thank you! Thank you, Adrian," murmured Jean, vaguely. She sank into the chair he drew forward for her, and sat with closed eyes until he put the glass of lemonade in her hands. He stood by, still holding the spoon, until she had drunk the last drop.

"There! You'll feel better after your tea now, I'm sure. But you're very pale, sweetheart."

Again she closed her eyes, and that rippling shiver ran over her. The very sound of his voice was anguish to her. It seemed to her that she must cry aloud with this unutterable fierce pain, or else swoon away. Her mind seemed failing her. She felt, with a great sense of nausea, that she did not know where or who she was.

"Oh, hold me!" she cried, as she thought in a loud voice, and then she felt her hus-

band bending anxiously over her and saying:

“What, Jean? You spoke so low I didn’t hear you, darling.”

“Oh, yes,” she murmured, staring about her. “I—I meant, thank you. It was very nice. I think it will help me.”

“Well, come and lie down now, darling. You really don’t know how ill you look.”

“Thank you! You—you are so good.” Her lips began to quiver. “I’m so foolish this morning,” she said, huskily, and pretending to clear her throat.

“Jeanie malat?” inquired Tony, pattering up to peer pitifully into her face. “Poor Jeanie! Très malat,” he then remarked. “Tony fassé!” (fiché).

Here Farrance gave him a kind turnabout by both shoulders in the direction of his playthings, saying, gently:

“Run along with you, little man, Jeanie wants to go to sleep.”

Somehow he had never felt so tenderly to her. He would have liked to take her up in his arms like a child and soothe and talk to her.

"Darling, that little pale face of yours breaks my heart," he said presently, and was shocked inexpressibly to see Jean throw herself back on the sofa and burst into peal after peal of laughter.

"Oh, I shall die! I shall die!" she kept exclaiming between each paroxysm. "Oh, forgive me, Adrian! I can't help it! I really can't!"

He was hurt and embarrassed, and rose, saying that he would go and get the tickets for "*Le Mariage de Barillon*."

"Yes—yes—that is much the best," she murmured. "I'll be all right when you come back. It's so kind of you to think of it." And then, as he went down-stairs he heard her light, staccato peals of laughter following him.

Venus was much frightened as her mistress clung to her, saying, in sobbing breaths: "I can't stop! I can't stop! Oh, give me something to make me stop, Vee!"

The black girl brought her a glass of cold water and a Bible, as the best consolations at her disposal, and after swallowing the whole glassful, Jean leaned on one elbow and began to turn the leaves of the New Testament slowly, carefully, as though searching for something. Presently she said to Venus: "You go and amuse Tony, Vee. I want to be very quiet."

Left to herself, she began at the Gospel of St. Matthew to turn carefully each leaf. After she had searched in this way to the sixth chapter of St. Luke she let herself drop wearily back upon the cushion and sighed as though her heart were bursting.

"Oh, how I wish our Lord had said more about love and marriage," she thought. "They bring more ~~pain~~ and bewilderment

than anything in life, and they are the only things He hasn't really told us about. How can I know what to do? Who is to tell me? It isn't right—it can't be right for me to go on making his life 'a long hypocrisy.' But oh! dear Saviour—what am I to do? what am I to do? Guide me! Show me! I can't live in this way. Each second is agony. I should make him more miserable than ever. Oh, just to think that there is no one but poor Venus in all the world who truly loves me, and she will marry some day and won't need me. There must be something to do. There must be some words here that will give me light. O my God! my God! my God! You must help me! You have promised! You must keep your word!"

She went on with her slow, painful search, until she reached the first of those four wonderful chapters of St. John, beginning "Let not your heart be troubled."

Thrilled, soothed, inexpressibly comforted, she read line by line until she came, in the second chapter, to the twelfth and thirteenth verses :

“ This is my commandment : that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

“ Greater love hath no man than this : that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Venus was startled in her whispered traffic with Tony as “ a baker man ” by the falling of the heavy book to the floor. She looked around to see Jean lying prone upon the sofa, quite still, her face buried in her hands.

“ Sh ! sh ! sh ! Tony ! Jeanie’s asleep,” said the negress, with her finger dividing her protruded lips.

“ Jeanie’s dort ? ” asked the child. “ Let’s go ’way den.” So he trotted gravely into the next room, and Venus tipped cautiously after him, closing the door behind her.

CHAPTER XXX.

JEAN lay thus motionless for about twenty minutes, afraid to stir or look up, lest the solution which had come to her should prove fleeting or unsound. According to her confused, excited brain there was her answer—there, in those most simple and beautiful of words: “Greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Strange that only the Beloved Disciple had recorded that wonderful saying concerning love! To her it meant hope, strength, deliverance. In her torture she twisted out of it a personal meaning which it never had.

“I have nothing and no one to live for, particularly,” she thought. “My first duty and love are to him. I make him wretched. I make him a hypocrite. He is not even free

to—to love her. How awful it must have been for him all these months. Oh, my poor darling! my poor darling! And to think it is I—I who have given him all this torture!” She began to shudder from head to foot—her eyes burned, aching with tears which would not fall. Then her thoughts began to turn to the practical questions involved.

“If—if I do it—he must never know—that would only be to torture him more. And how, how can I—ah!—” She sat erect, pushing the hair back from her hot face. “Maman Cici!—I can borrow her needle as if I were not well! I will write a little note to Adrian and pin it on the pincushion in our room—something to say Maman Cici has lent me some medicine and I hope to feel better by this evening. Ah! God knows I do!” and again there rose in her that awful desire to burst into wild laughter; but instead, she got up quietly, brushed her hair, put on her hat, which had fallen to the

floor, and opening the door into the next room, called out: "Be sure to have Tony asleep by twelve o'clock if I don't come back, Vee! I'm going out for a while."

Maman Cici at first demurred at parting with her precious needle, but Jean promised to seal it up in a packet and return it to her by Venus in two hours at the latest—so she gave her the whole case, with the little vial full of opium, saying, as she gave it a last loving polish on the sleeve of her gown: "Ah! You little goody-goody! You see if you don't fall as much in love with it as I've done!"

After Jean had reached the door she went back suddenly, and taking Maman Cici's large face between her slight palms, kissed her affectionately on cheeks and forehead.

"You have been very, very, very good to me always, and I do thank you, dear," she said, in a low voice, and was gone before Madame Vamousin could say anything in reply.

As Jean remounted the stairs to her apartment she heard her husband's voice talking to Venus, and stopped a moment to lean against the balusters, deadly faint.

"Ah, there you are, dear! The most splendid seats—and Benson tells me it's awfully funny. But you look better already—not quite so white."

"I—I feel better," stammered Jean. She was blushing intensely, as though her lover rather than her husband were speaking to her.

"Why, Jean! Are all those pink signals out in my honor?" asked Farrance, gently amused. "Has 'Le Mariage de Barillon' helped me to this delightful display? Alors! Vive 'Barillon!'" Jean looked at him amazed. He had never seemed so gay since she knew him. The truth was that he had never been so nearly in love with her.

It is a strange fact that by some subtle instinct we often learn to value a thing just as we are about to lose it.

“How pretty you are, Jean!” said Farrance, coming up to her. “May I kiss you?” His tone was too genuine to be doubted. No matter if it were only the passion of a moment of forgetfulness—her heart was famished—perhaps it was the last kiss he would ever give her. She threw herself upon his breast with a look he had never seen in her face before, her eyes dilated, her lips parted, crimson.

“Yes—yes—kiss me, Adrian! Oh, my love! Tell me that you love me!”

Her slight figure was as tense as a rod of steel against him, her arms binding him to her with an energy which made her own breathing difficult. He was roused, exhilarated. He kissed her with a passion which he had not felt for many a day, and as his lips left hers, she still held up her lovely, childish mouth as though thirsty for his caresses.

But it was only a moment's whirl of emo-

tion, and after it she sank down again, pale and listless, her head drooping a little at the thought of her own self-abandonment.

Shortly afterward Farrance went up into his studio for the day's work, and Jean to their bedroom to write the note which was to be pinned on the pincushion. As she dipped the pen into the inkstand and began to trace the words "Dearest Adrian," she heard him whistling while he moved about overhead. Tears blinded her suddenly, and one dropped in a great blur on the letters of his name. She tore up the note and began another. This time she wrote "My Dearest." "He is my dearest," she whispered, with a sob; "he is all that I have—that I thought I had." Then she went on firmly:

"MY DEAREST: I am feeling so wretchedly that I have borrowed Maman Cici's little 'aiguille' for morphine. Don't blame her for lending it to me—she didn't want to a

bit — but I've sometimes taken McMunn's Elixir for headache and thought this might help me. I do want to go to the play with you to-night, and I'm going to take this. Please don't let anyone disturb me till the last minute. I do love you so, my dearest. You have always been so good to me. You have made me so happy always."

Here she paused, tears blinding her again. "I'm afraid that's too much. It might make him suspect."

A second time she wrote the note over carefully, firmly, leaving out the sentence, "You have made me so happy always," and changing "You have always been so good to me" into "You are always so good to me."

Then she signed it: "Forever your own little loving Jean," kissed it and put it into an envelope, which she fastened to the pin-cushion with her own silver hat-pin. Having

done this she called Venus and sent her out on an errand which would keep her for the next hour and a half, and established Tony happily at a game of blocks on the floor where she could watch him. Then, locking the door, she took out the case, and having drawn the little syringe full of the clear, harmless-looking fluid, wiped it carefully as Maman Cici had shown her how to do, and fitted on one of the hollow needles. Just as she had done this Tony trotted up and held out a varnished block, on which was a large red "O."

"Wound O," he announced proudly ; then producing another : "Cwookut S."

Jean's heart was hammering violently, and she had pricked herself with the needle in her haste to hide it under the skirt of her gown.

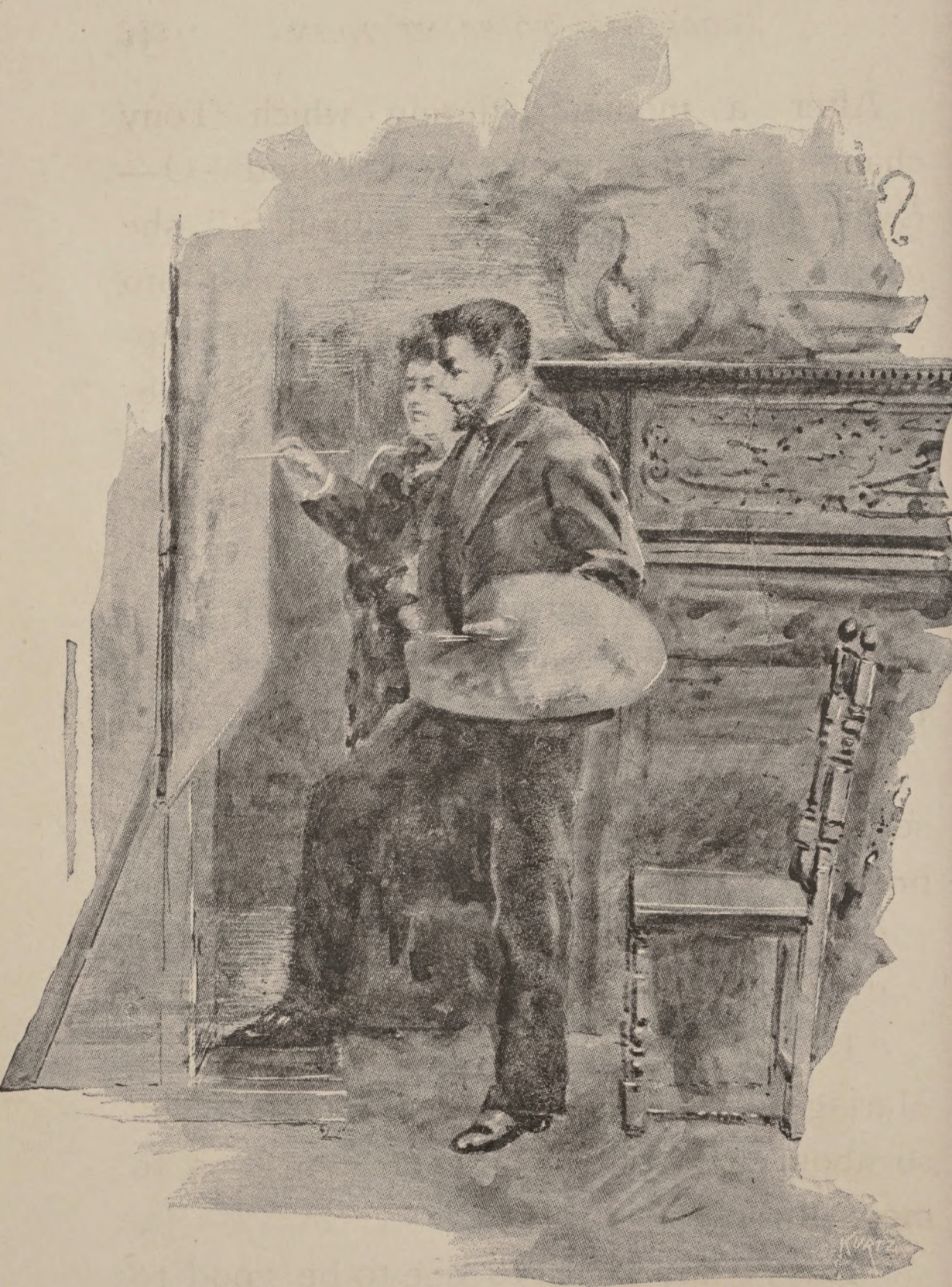
"Lovely, lovely, darling ! What a clever boy !" she exclaimed, gayly.

"Venus telled me," said Tony, absorbing

this praise with his usual placidity, and then trotted away again.

Jean withdrew the needle and looked at it. How strange it was for death to be hidden in that odd little instrument of glass and steel. Farrance was now whistling Schubert's "Serenade," pausing in the midst of the bass and in unheard-of places, so that she could almost see his absorbed pause, while he did a bit of brushing more intricate than usual. All at once a sudden, unlooked-for, overwhelming desire rushed over her. Why not go upstairs and say to him: "Look, dear! She never loved you. She told me so. She showed me the picture of the man she really loved—but it was not yours. I love you—I love you utterly. Give me yourself, your love. Forget her—forget her!"

"Oh, dear Lord, help me, forgive me!" she whispered, her voice thick, drops of anguish starting out upon her forehead. "I shall go mad, I think!"



SHE WENT AND STOOD SILENTLY BESIDE HIM.—p. 341.

After a moment, during which Tony chanted monotonously: "Wound O—Cwookut S—Wound O—Cwookut S," she got up, slipped the hypodermic syringe into a drawer, and, unlocking the door, went upstairs to the studio. Farrance was so absorbed in his work that he did not notice her.

She went and stood silently beside him for awhile, and at last said, timidly:

"How are you getting along, dear?"

"Oh, is that you, Jean? First rate, thanks."

He went on with his painting in entire absent-mindedness, whistling softly under his breath.

"You have everything you want?"

"Yes, thanks, dear, everything."

"I—I am so obliged to you about 'Le Mariage de Barillon,' Adrian. I thank you so about everything. You are so good to me—all the time."

"It isn't any credit to one to be good to

you, Jeanie. Would you mind standing a little to the left? You make me a bit nervous so close to my arm. There—that's perfect."

"I—think I'll go now."

"Well, be sure to rest, so as to be fresh for the play to-night."

"Yes—thank you, Adrian—I will—I——"

Her voice faltered. It seemed as though he must feel the horrible throb of unavailing love and anguish which racked her, as though some instinct must make him turn and take her to his heart for the last time. But no, he went on whistling Schubert's 'Serenade' in execrable time, and searching through the whole gamut of his palette for the combination that would make a certain rose-gray tone on his model's breast.

"I will go and lie down now, Adrian."

"Yes, dear—that's right."

"That is a lovely study, my dearest," the last words were spoken with such a sweet,

winning shyness that Farrance turned, his mouth full of brushes, and exclaimed: "My child, you are quite too charming to-day. Do go and let me work."

This pleased and hurt her at the same time. She turned quickly so that he might not see the tears which rushed to her eyes, and ran down-stairs again to their room. Throwing herself upon the bed, and pressing to her breast the pillow where her husband's head rested every night, she broke for the first time into such wild weeping that Tony sent up a sympathetic whimper from among his piles of gaudy blocks. This quieted her, and she ran to soothe him, having once more locked the door.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THERE was nothing more to be done. She opened the Bible at the verse which she had seen that morning, and, unfastening her dress while she read, slipped on a little dressing-gown of pale-blue cashmere, which had been part of her trousseau and which Farrance especially liked. Then she brushed and combed her lovely curling hair, but "not too smooth," running her fingers through it to produce the loose burnished masses which she knew he admired. On her feet she drew a pair of pretty bronze shoes which he had also commended.

"I want him to think of me as pretty—afterward," said the poor child, her lip quivering.

Then she looked about to see if she had forgotten anything.

“Oh, yes! I must seal the package for Maman Cici and unlock the door—but not yet. Tony, come say prayers with Jeanie.”

“Pas’ pray-time,” said the boy, shaking his head.

“But won’t you pray with Jeanie when she asks you?”

“Pas’ pray-time,” he repeated. Jean was too tired to argue with him. She said “Our Father” through unfalteringly in her sweet, clear voice, which was that of a child, and then two or three sentences of the church service which had somehow remained in her mind.

“O Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me! O Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, grant me Thy peace! Lord, have mercy upon me! Christ, have mercy upon me! Lord, have mercy upon me!”

She felt quiet and very happy. “ ‘ Greater love hath no man ; ’ Christ said that Himself,” she murmured. “ I have no one but Adrian, and it’s better for me to die for him than to live for him. My darling, my husband ! I do it for you ! Jesus understands ; I am not afraid—no, not the least ! And I’m glad I thought of this blue gown. Perhaps it will please him to remember me in it.” She took the little needle and kissed it passionately ; then, with a quick movement, ran the sharp steel into the smooth flesh of her slender forearm, and pressed the piston slowly down until its head rested on the frame.

A startled look swept over her face for an instant as she drew the needle out and saw the empty tube. Then she went quickly to the table, and, after sealing and addressing the needle, wrote on a slip of paper the word “ Jesus,” and pinned it to her chemise, out of sight, but where her hand could press it

against her heart. Afterward she lay down upon the bed.

For some moments she felt nothing ; but then came internally a sharp, burning sensation, not unpleasant. A desire to talk, to sing, stole gradually over her. She was quite light-hearted, and began to think that probably she would go to sleep presently and then wake up to find she had been dreaming, and then would go to see “ *Le Mariage de Barillon* ” and have a charming evening. Next came a delicious languor ; it was as though warm, rosy wine were streaming through her veins. Her mouth became slightly dry, and it was an effort for her to moisten her lips or move in the least ; but this strange, thrilling heaviness of her body was in some way delicious. Life had never seemed half so full, so charming, so worth living. “ Still, I am not afraid to die—I see that I must—only I am so happy in spite of everything. Oh, how lovely this is—like

floating on a magic carpet. I believe the bed will begin to rise presently." She closed her eyes for an instant, and it seemed to her that the counterpane was covered with great damask roses, such as used to grow in the garden at home, drenched with dew and fragrance. "They will soak through to the sheets!" she exclaimed, starting up. Her mouth felt lined with fur; she could swallow only with a great effort. Tony was still chanting his song of "Wound O" and "Cwookut S."

A sensation of awe crept over the girl. "Tony," she managed to say, "Tony, Jeanie's malade. Come pray for her!"

The boy answered this appeal at once, his round face anxious and sympathetic. Tugging, scrambling, breathing heavily, he managed to get on the bed beside her, and then laid one grimy, perspiring little hand on her dry forehead.

"Fais do-do," he suggested, finally.

“Yes—in—a—minute, dearie,” murmured Jean, drowsily. “But now pray for Jeanie.”

“Bon Dieu! bless papa—bless Jeanie—bless Tony—bless Venus—bless all the world——”

“Do—you—love—Jeanie, dear—un tout petit peu?”

“No! a big little bit! tomme ça!” He threw himself upon her breast, and strained his arms about her until his chubby face was scarlet. Jean smiled faintly. She seemed to see miles and miles of fair June grass blowing and rippling in a light wind.

“Dear Tony—dear little man!” she managed to murmur. What charming ideas were haunting her. Someone was playing a violin close by. What heavenly music! And always that grass blowing, blowing, and the sound of falling water far away, and of birds calling as at daybreak.

“Fais do-do! fais do-do!” crowed Tony, rocking himself back and forth. Then he

stopped and peered up under Jean's closed lids. "Tu dors, Jeanie?" he asked; and then answered himself in a tone of intense satisfaction: "Oui, Jeanie dort!"

After waiting very patiently for some moments to be sure of this fact, he worked himself laboriously down upon the floor again and went on with his game.

Half an hour later Jean opened her eyes for an instant and looked about her. Her glance fell finally upon Tony, who, pausing, block in hand, gazed back at her.

"Oh, such a lovely, lovely dream, Tony, darling!" she whispered, smiling; and he shook his finger at her, as she used to do when he lay awake in his crib, and began again his crooning: "Fais do-do! fais do-do!" as her eyelids sank.

Two hours later, when Farrance came down-stairs to dress for the play, he was met by the small, sturdy figure of Tony, who held up a warning hand and breathed forth:

“Pas bwée (pas be bruit)! Jeanie fais do-do.”

Farrance then read the little note on the pincushion, and as he brushed his hair, stood at the foot of the bed looking down at her. She was exquisitely lovely; her lips were parted and smiled.

“I’ve never seen her so beautiful!” thought he. “That old witch’s stuff must have done her good.” Here he noticed that Tony had again climbed upon the bed, and, stooping, he lifted him gently but without ceremony to the floor. The child marched seriously away without a word, and returned, dragging something after him. This he tried, with great labor, to push up upon the bed beside Jean.

“What the mischief are you after, monkey?” asked his father, in a whisper.

“Jeanie told,” said the child, for the first time putting up a grieved lip.

“Nonsense, old man !” returned Farrance ;
“it’s a warm day.”

“Jeanie told,” insisted the boy.

To soothe him, Farrance put a gentle hand on the girl’s forehead. It was like ice.

“Good God !—that accursed morphine !” he cried out. “Call Venus, quick, Tony !—quick, boy !”

He caught up Jean in his arms. Her head fell back ; her eyes gleamed in a narrow band, as of silver, between the thick lashes. She had been dead fully two hours.

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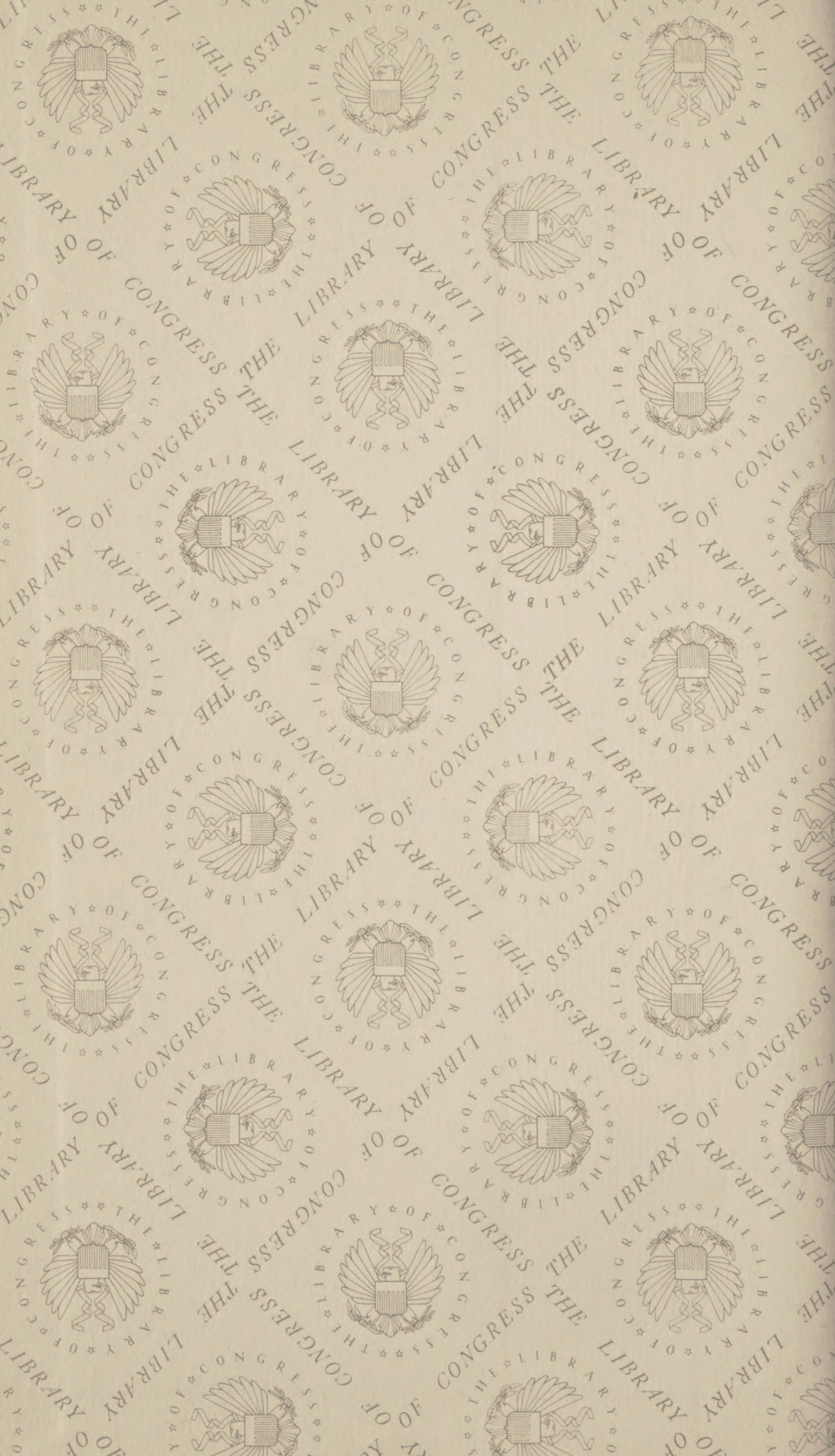
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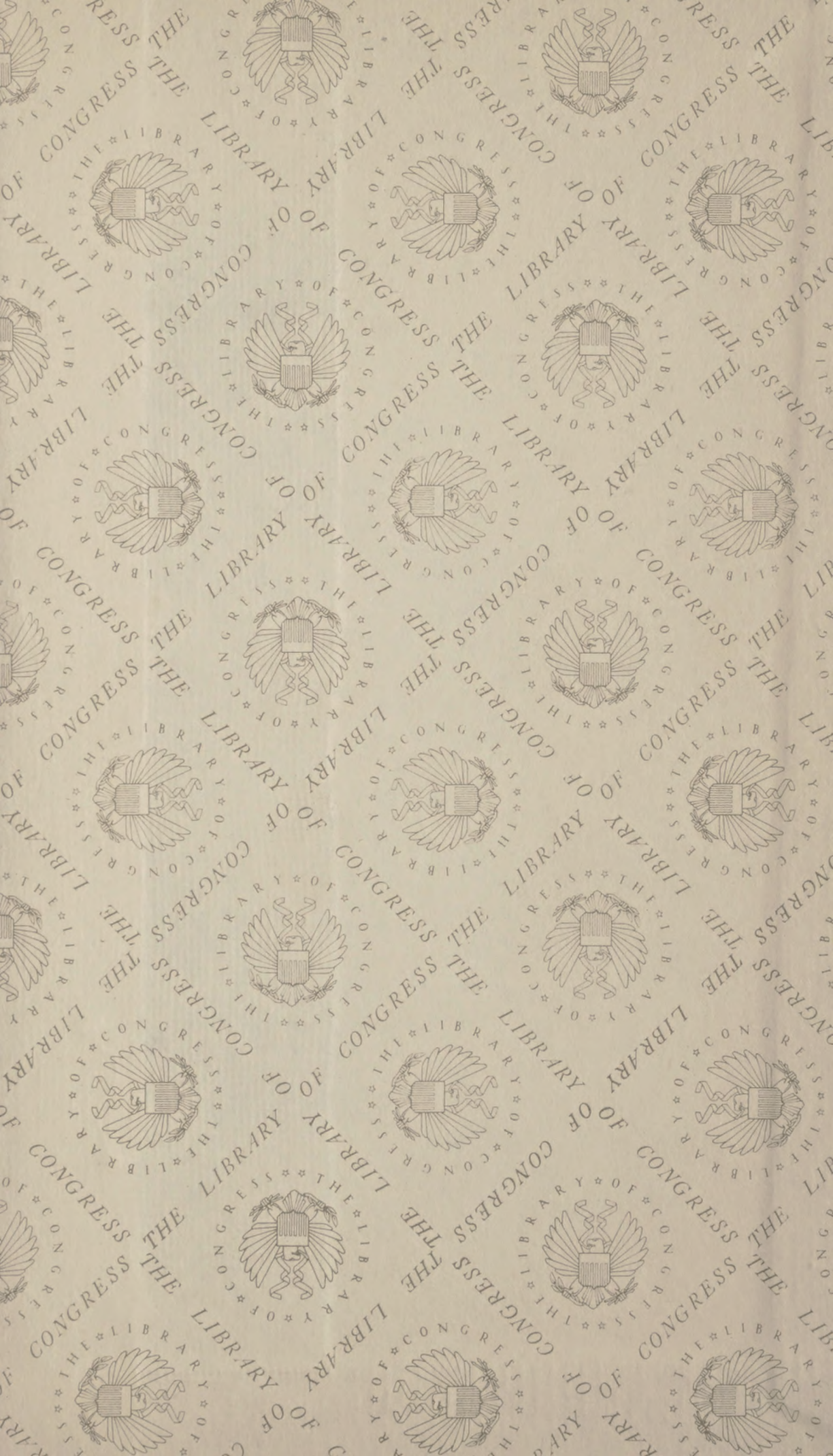
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